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CHICAGO'S LEFT BANK

Gigantic, wilful, young,
Chicago sitteth at the northwest gates,
With restless violent hands and
casual tongue
Moulding her mighty fates.

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY,
"*An Ode In Time of Hesitation*"
stanza 13

CHICAGO'S LEFT BANK

BY

ALSON J. SMITH

HENRY REGNERY COMPANY
CHICAGO 1953

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HARRIET MONROE

MARGARET ANDERSON

EUNICE TIETJENS

JOSEPH MEDILL

ADELINA PATTI

LORADO TAFT

MARY GARDEN

Painting by IVAN ALBRIGHT: "*Heavy the Oar to Him Who is Tired, Heavy the Coat, Heavy the Sea*"

VACHEL LINDSAY

LOUIS SULLIVAN

STANLEY SZUKALSKI

MAURICE BROWNE

CHICAGO'S LEFT BANK

OUT IN CHICAGO, *the only genuinely civilized city in the New World, they take the fine arts seriously and get into such frets and excitements about them as are raised nowhere else save by baseball, murder, political treachery, foreign wars, and romantic loves . . . almost one fancies the world bumped by a flying asteroid, and the Chicago River suddenly turned into the Seine.*—HENRY MENCKEN *in the* Smart Set.

Chapter I

Montmartre in the Midwest

EVERYTHING in Chicago dates from the Year of the Fire, 1871. *Post anno incendii,* the chief structure left standing on the north bank of the Chicago River was the waterworks building on East Chicago Avenue. The tall stone tower of this inelegant edifice looked out over the fire-blackened ruins of what had been one of the city's better residential sections, the Near North Side.

It was only natural that when the rebuilding began, the area in the immediate vicinity of the old water tower should be dubbed "Towertown." And, like the arch in New York's Washington Square and the golden dome of Sacré Coeur on Montmartre, that tower was destined to cast a long shadow over the world of arts and letters. In the years between 1912 and 1924, it was the geographical center of what was perhaps the most vital literary and artistic upsurge in the history of the

country. At least Papa Mencken thought so; in 1920 he went to England to startle the dilettantes of Fleet Street with the information that the Germans had really won the war and that Chicago, Illinois, was the literary capital of the universe.

The part about Chicago was approximately true, although book critic Harry Hansen, speaking for the city's better classes, angrily denied the accusation. In those years corn-fed hopefuls from all over the Midwest flowed into the free-and-easy bohemia of the gigantic abattoir by Lake Michigan. They came to read their poems to Harriet Monroe in the studio at 543 Cass Street, to study under Lorado Taft at the Art Institute, and to chase fire-engines for Henry Justin Smith and the Chicago *Daily News* in return for the privilege of rubbing shoulders in the city room with Carl Sandburg and Ben Hecht.

Towertown was the center of this renaissance. It was happily situated between the palaces of a rich residential area, the Lake Shore Drive "Gold Coast," and the miasmal slums of Little Hell. Little Hell, like the deteriorated areas around New York's Greenwich Village, was largely Italian, and the cheap spaghetti parlors of the neighborhood had atmosphere to fit the temperament and price to fit the pocketbook of the impoverished artists and writers in the batik-curtained coach houses, studios, and stables of Towertown. North Avenue, main artery of the old German "Nort' Seit'," bounded bohemia on the north, and the river, with its many bridges into the Loop, was on the south. Bisecting the whole area was the bright gut of the North Clark Street rialto, traditional main drag of hobohemia and the demi-world, with its saloons, night clubs, gambling joints and "hotels." Rents were cheap, the Loop was within easy walking distance, and the finest beach in the city was at the foot of Oak Street. All this and Ireland's, too—for one of the world's best sea food restaurants was on North Clark Street, and still is.

The literary revival that sent Papa Mencken into such ecstasies centered in Towertown; at least, that was where most of the slaves of the muse domiciled themselves. But from this center the creative spirit extended ectoplasmic tentacles southward—to the 57th Street area around the old Midway Plaisance on the South Side, where a University of Chicago cultus grouped around Robert Herrick and William Vaughn Moody, to the Fine Arts Building at Michigan and Van Buren where Lorado Taft held court, to the old Chicago *Daily News* Building on North Wells Street, where practically everybody who was anybody or whoever hoped to be anybody served a semester or two with Henry Justin Smith, and to the Tribune sanctum at Madison and Dearborn, where Jim Keeley and Walter Howey were putting out a newspaperman's newspaper for Joe Patterson and the McCormicks.

To set 1912 as the date for the beginning of the *ausland* literary renaissance is rather arbitrary. There was, of course, a stubborn cultural minority in sprawling, hog-butcher Chicago before that date, a minority that was heartily ashamed of the city's rawness. That, perhaps, was the difference. Before 1912, the city's writers and artists resisted the brutal power and newness around them; it oppressed them, and they looked with longing eyes towards Beacon Hill and lower Fifth Avenue. After 1912, the Sandburg-Anderson-Masters-Hecht coterie gloried in Chicago's toughness; they hugged its stockyards, railroads, and steel mills to their bosoms, and sang to the world in the language of Sherwood Anderson's *Mid-American Chants:*

> You know my city—Chicago triumphant; factories and marts and roar of machines—horrible, terrible, ugly and brutal. Can a singer arise and sing in this smoke and grime? Can he keep his throat clear? Can his courage survive?

And from their vantage points at the bars of Schlogl's and Stillson's restaurants respectively, the boys from the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* shouted a confident answer that could be heard around the world—"Hell, yes!"

As a matter of fact, the *News* and the *Tribune* crowds never had shared the inferiority complex that afflicted so many Chicago writers in the pre-1912 era. As early as 1888, when the Whitechapel Club was founded around a nucleus consisting of Opie Read, George Ade, Finley Peter Dunne, and Ben King, the *News* was standing staunchly for things Midwestern. The Medill-McCormick *Tribune* had always thumbed its nose at New York and Boston. The Arkansas Traveler (Opie Read) and Mr. Dooley (Finley Peter Dunne) poked sly fun at the affectations of the seaboard literati and gloried in Chicago's provincialism.

The Whitechapel Club itself was the somewhat raffish organizational expression of such literary consciousness as there was in Chicago in those days. It was organized in 1888 with Opie Read as its moving spirit and Hobart Chatfield Chatfield-Taylor as its first president, and it was like nothing else that ever was on land or sea. Some of those early members were Brand Whitlock, later to be U. S. Minister to Belgium, George Ade, Wallace Rice, W. W. Denslow (the artist), Finley Peter Dunne, Charlie Holloway (the foremost muralist in the country), Alfred Henry Lewis and his brother William, Herbert O. Hallett, Tom Powers, Horace Taylor, the Hon. William E. Mason (later U. S. Senator from Illinois), Dr. G. Frank Lydston, Herman the Great (the wizard), Frank and Leigh Reilly, John C. Eastman, and Ben King. Frederick Upham Adams, the novelist, was treasurer, but he was not bonded since there were no funds and no dues. The club had no regular meetings, and the secretary's minutes were limited to a single phrase which covered everything: "The proceedings were indecorous."

Headquarters was a room opening on the alley in back of the *Daily News* Building. There was no janitor, and no key. Several members were sure to be there around the clock, although seldom in condition to answer the door.

The club's decor was primitive Chicagoan, the center table which dominated the room being a gigantic coffin. The walls were tastefully hung with trophies of murder and other local sports—ropes, knives, pistols, and various lethal items gathered by the journalistic *fratres* in the course of their daily work. One of the finest collections of skulls in the country was the property of the organization; it had been assembled by a brother who happened to be an alienist at the Elgin Asylum for the Insane. The club chaplain, an irreverent divine by the name of Rev. Thomo "Tombstone" Thompson, had the crowns of these skulls sawed off and the eyeholes enlarged. With the aid of Charlie Holloway, he set a prism of red, green, blue, yellow or purple glass in each of the eyeholes. The skulls were then mounted on the gas jets, and when the lights were turned on there was a beautiful and dignified stained glass effect.

The place of honor in the center of the coffin table was reserved for a particularly large and impressive skull which, previous to her sudden exit from this vale of tears, had belonged to a lady known to the police as Waterford Jack, the Queen of the Sands. "The Sands" was an unsavory area bounded by the lake, Chicago Avenue, and State Street and included a good bit of what was later Towertown. But in the pre-fire days it was known simply and unfavorably as "The Sands," and compared to it the levees of Port Said and Singapore were excellent locations for Ladies Aid picnics. When Long John Wentworth became mayor he eradicated "The Sands" by calling out the Fire Department and having it wash the entire settlement into the lake. In the excitement somebody lowered a hose nozzle or some other blunt instrument on the noggin of Waterford Jack,

and her skull, which inexplicably became separated from the rest of her, entered into the public domain. From there it was but a short step to the Whitechapel Club.

Mortuary art was not the only form of decoration in the club room. Artists from all over the world stopped off at the club when in Chicago, and many of them contributed drawings which were hung on the wall between the relics of mayhem. Many of these sketches were of club members, and since the majority of them were made on the premises between the hours of 3 A.M. and 12 Noon, when guests and hosts alike were in a state to enlist the horrified interest of the W.C.T.U., they were wonderful to behold.

Since there were no dues, finances constituted something of a problem. There was a regular monthly overhead for rent and liquor—considered the only two indispensable items in the "budget"—and it remained for the enterprising chaplain, the Rev. "Tombstone" Thompson, to hit upon a scheme for erasing an indebtedness of some $800. His plan was simple. A mayoralty election was coming up. The Whitechapel Club should become a political party, declare a platform, nominate candidates for all city offices—and solicit campaign funds. The plan was accepted enthusiastically, and "Grizzly" Adams and "Tombstone" Thompson were appointed as a nominating committee. They approached the current club president, Hobart Chatfield Chatfield-Taylor. Would he permit his name, or any part of it, to be presented to the electorate as candidate for the office of mayor? He accepted, graciously permitting the presentation of his full name. A complete ticket was nominated, and the entire club was appointed to the campaign Finance Committee. Mr. Taylor ran on a popular platform of "no gas, no water, no police"; his campaign got wonderful publicity and he received more than 1000 waggish votes on election day. More important, some $900 in campaign contributions flowed into the club's coffers, and Grizzly Adams was able to pay off

the creditors. After the election Hobart Chatfield Chatfield-Taylor went back to writing the biographies of Molière and Goldoni for which he was later to be decorated by France and Italy. Shortly thereafter the Whitechapel Club merged with the Chicago Press Club, with considerable damage to the dignity of that body.

Meanwhile, the more sensitive Chicago writers and artists were carrying on, holding their noses when the wind blew from the stockyards, and yearning for the more subtle ozone of the effete East. As early as 1879, "reading tournaments" were being held in Towertown's McCormick Hall, just over the bridge on North Clark Street, and here Anna Morgan upheld the blowsy honor of the city in competition with such doughty readers from New York as George Vanderhoff and James E. Murdock. They "read" selections like "How The Old Horse Won The Bet," "A Naughty Little Girl's View Of Life In A Hotel," "Money Mush," and "The Devil Doll." It was in McCormick Hall that the temperamental Murdock once complained that he could not play off a tie by reading "The Lord's Prayer" in cold blood.

But nothing lacking solidity could withstand the August wind off the stockyards or the January wind off the lake in those days. Francis Fisher Browne who had founded *The Dial* in Chicago in 1882, later sold out to Martyn Johnson, who revived the magazine in New York. Edgar Wakeman established a literary weekly called *The Current* in 1883, but two years later the Chicago climate and a debt of $1500 sent him scurrying for a Trappist monastery in Wisconsin. The going was really tough.

In 1890, however, the muse established a permanent beachhead at Michigan Avenue and Van Buren Street. The Fine Arts Building was erected on that site, and immediately became an outpost of culture on the frontier of Megapolis. The Fortnightly Club, a lady's literary organization centering around

the *mater familias* of Chicago belles-lettres, Anna Morgan, had its headquarters there. John McCutcheon, the cartoonist, had a study in the building, and so did Lorado Taft, Charles Francis Browne, Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Herman MacNeil, Frank and Joe Leyendecker, Blanche Ostertag, Ralph Clarkson and George Ade. Tea was at four every afternoon, but the big brass samovar on the tenth floor was always full.

In 1912, all hell broke loose in the literary life of Chicago, and the center of the vortex was in Towertown. Upton Sinclair had come on in 1905 to nose around the sheep entrails in the vacant lots "back o' the yards" and had left town with notes for "The Jungle" in his portfolio and a permanent tic in his social consciousness. Hamlin Garland had arrived in 1907 to marry Zulene Taft, Lorado's sister, and founded "The Cliff Dwellers," a club for artistic men. But he did not stay long. The two authors did not touch the town appreciably, and the town did not touch them at all.

In 1912 Harriet Monroe, Chicago-born, a poet in her own right and an ex-teacher in Anna Morgan's elocution school, established *Poetry—A Magazine of Verse* in the very heart of Towertown at 543 North Cass Street. From then on almost every transcontinental train disgorged a score or more of young hopefuls who walked from the station up to Cass Street before breakfast to read their verses to Harriet. Her "poetry evenings" at the Petit Gourmet drew not only the long-hairs but such bare-knuckled boys as Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, and Edgar Lee Masters, the latter a practicing lawyer by day (a partner of Clarence Darrow) and a poet after 5 P.M. *Poetry* was the first to publish Tagore and Vachel Lindsay, and the latter first read his "General Booth Enters Heaven" to a somewhat mystified group of the faithful at 543 North Cass. Ezra Pound, whose verse was alleged to read as well from the bottom up as from the top down, was *Poetry*'s foreign correspondent, and Amy Lowell and William Butler Yeats were regular contributors.

It was in 1912, too, that the man whom Witter Bynner was to call the "iron cat" arrived on the North Side—Carl Sandburg. He came down from Milwaukee to work on the old socialist *World;* he and his wife, whom he always called "that Steichen girl" (she was the photographer Edward Steichen's sister) lived in a dreary flat on North Hermitage Avenue with their two daughters, Spink and Skabootch. Sandburg fell in love with the city as few men have; he prowled the streets with that peculiar ambling walk of his, wearing a leather cap with a long, broken visor to protect his weakened eyes from the sun, chewing on a Pittsburg stogie and talking with anybody who was willing to brave its stench. He watched the fog come in on little cat feet, dined with dynamiters in German saloons on the "Nort' Seit'," and paid his respects to Billy Sunday in terms that Harriet Monroe thought were a bit uncouth, but published anyway:

> You slimy bunkshooter . . . I like to watch a good four-flusher work, but not when he starts people puking and calling for the doctors . . .

Later, when the *World* went under, Carl went to the *Daily News* to work for that hard-boiled saint, Henry Justin Smith, as a movie critic. With his old leather wind-breaker, broken-visored cap, and fearsome stogie, he was the despair of the management of Schlogl's, which was never able to tempt him from his invariable ham-on-rye and coffee. One day a stranger in the newspaper office saw him puttering around, chewing on his cigar, and asked Ben Hecht who on earth *that* could be. Ben glanced up, smiled, and said: "Oh, *that?* That's old John Guts, the herring-catcher."

Those were the days in Schlogl's. Harry Hansen, the *Daily News* book critic, made so bold as to say that the old German rookery decorated with Berncastel lithographs served the finest

food in the world and the most exquisite Rüdesheimer to wash it down. It was in the Loop, only a hoe handle and a half from the *Daily News* office on North Wells Street, and it was the kind of a place where you took three hours for lunch and smoked a strong cigar with your dessert and coffee as a matter of course. You did not order but took whatever the waiter chose to bring and could rest assured that it would be delicious, although the menu advertised such delicacies as eel in aspic and "owls to order." All the *News* staff ate there—Henry Justin Smith, Keith Preston, Harry Hansen, Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, Vincent Starrett, John Gunther—and they were generally joined at some point by Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, Llewellyn Jones, Lew Sarrett, the Tribune's Burt Rascoe, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Hendrik Willem Van Loon. In later years "Bobby" Edwards would be there, twanging his dodo-bird ukelele and singing "The sultan's wives have got the hives—Allah, be merciful!"

The gang at Schlogl's was a worthy successor to the Whitechapel Club, and it liked nothing better than to bait the unwary visitor from New York and points east. On one occasion a prominent English lecturer, gathering data on the American female to edify the folks back in Yorkshire, had the misfortune to be invited to lunch at Schlogl's. After the dessert, when the shadows from the El lengthened and the conversation languished, the visitor took out his note-book. "Now," he said conspiratorially, "we are all men here together, all interested in the same subject. So let me ask your opinion, that is to say, the sum of your own personal experience. Is it true that the American girl permits—ah, er—certain liberties of her person, without the impairment of, shall we say, her technical sex capital?"

There was a moment of delighted and appreciative silence. Then Ben Hecht, a beatific smile on his face, began. "You mean . . . ", said Ben.

They didn't let the poor chap go until after 5, by which

time there was no aspect of the subject that had not been covered exhaustively.

These were halcyon days on the Left Bank, too. Theodore Dreiser, the literary shadow of John Peter Altgeld, had come on before the turn of the century to do newspaper work while limning the outlines of the Chicago shop-girl in *Sister Carrie* and the LaSalle Street money-grubber in *The Financier*. Sherwood Anderson had put the paint business behind him and was working on *Winesburg, Ohio* in a dingy furnished room on Chicago Avenue in Towertown. Lew Sarrett, the "prophet of the thunder drums" was trying to forget a slum childhood by writing wonderful stories about the North Woods. Ben Hecht, the expatriate New Yorker whom Harry Hansen called "Pagliacci on the fire-escape," was cursing his newspaper assignment and waiting for four o'clock to come so that he could go home and work on *Eric Dorn*. Down at the University of Chicago, Robert Herrick was busy with *The Web of Life* and *The Common Lot*. Edna St. Vincent Millay was haunting W's studio in Towertown and reading her poetry to Harriet at 543 Cass. Edwin Bulmer was cashing royalty checks on *The Indian Drum*, and Edna Ferber was back to work in the North Clark Street atmosphere she liked best. Old Opie Read took his ease in the Press Club and encouraged everybody. Edgar Ansel and Paul Mowrer, Hiram Motherwell, Lloyd Lewis, Paul Leach, Henry B. Sell, and Bob Casey had come on to work for the *Daily News*. Ring Lardner, Burt Rascoe, John McCutcheon, and Bert Leston Taylor were toiling for Jim Keeley at the *Tribune*. Walter Howey had left the *Tribune* for Hearst. Francis Hackett, Lucian Cary and Floyd Dell were giving the *Evening Post* the best book page in town. On Tooker Alley in Towertown, one-eyed Jack Jones had started the Dill Pickle Club, and here, every Saturday night, a Chicago one-act play, written by some unknown Chicago playwright, presented by unknown Chicago actors, took the boards. Over on the West

Side the Hull House players were doing plays by Euripedes and Strindberg, and Laura Dainty Pelham, with Broadway stardom forty years behind her, was directing and telling her friends about a youngster named Paul Muni. Towertown's studios were humming, and the Tree Building on North State Street buzzed with sculptors and painters, working and planning their annual No-Jury Ball. This latter was an event designed to raise money for the No-Jury Exhibit, a show for the No-Jury artists who couldn't get the patrons that "Lorado Taft and his gang of fakers have on their strings." Art, literature, the little theatre—all were booming. From the East, Papa Mencken looked on approvingly. "In Chicago," he pontificated, "a spirit broods upon the face of the waters."

A very material expression of the spirit that brooded upon the face of the waters was Harriet Converse Moody, widow of the poet William Vaughn Moody, who had died tragically of a brain tumor only a short time after their marriage. After her husband's death, Harriet Moody transformed their old house at 29th and Groveland (now Ellis) into the foremost literary salon in the country. To the house on Groveland and to the Moody summer place in the western Massachusetts Berkshires came the great ones in poetry, music, and the arts—Robert Frost, Rabindranath Tagore, Edward Arlington Robinson, Vachel Lindsay—and scores of lesser lights, to bask in the warmth of Harriet Moody's sympathetic personality, and to enjoy to the full her skill in arts culinary and conversational. In these she was unsurpassed; even before her husband's untimely death she had a large income from the delicacies which she devised and baked herself for Marshall Field's restaurant. The whole story of this remarkable woman is admirably told in Olivia Dunbar's *A House in Chicago*, which was published in 1947 by the University of Chicago Press.

Of course, bohemia acquired the usual camp-followers. One wealthy dilettante of the Arts threw periodic studio parties in

Towertown at which all of the guests were his mistresses, past, present, and prospective. A group of male homosexuals called "the blue birds," after their leader, became entrenched in Towertown; on warm summer evenings they would distribute themselves along the benches on the esplanade by the lake, and the leader would walk slowly by, down towards the Drake Hotel. From bench to bench would go the excited whisper: "Oh, here he comes! Here comes the blue-bird!" Then as he passed they would flirt with him outrageously until finally, with a delicate lift of the wrist, he indicated his selection for the night. The rest would then pair up and drift back to their "studios."

With the coming of Prohibition, Towertown became something of a haunt of the underworld, too. The Dill Pickle became a scarcely-disguised speakeasy, and even had itself raided a few times just for the publicity. "Yellow Kid" Weil, the confidence man par excellence, took to hanging out there, and so did old Dr. Ben Reitman, the anarchist. Dion O'Banion, whom most of bohemia knew as a singing waiter at McGovern's Liberty Cabaret on Clark Street, suddenly blossomed out as a prince of gangdom; his headquarters were in a flower shop on North State Street across from Holy Name Cathedral, where he had once been a choir boy, and from this Towertown center he directed the operations of a murderous outfit that numbered among its members such accomplished thugs as Three-Gun Louis Alterie, Schemer Drucci, Bugs Moran, and Little Hymie Weiss. As a lover of flowers and music (he would feed nickels into a player piano by the hour) Dion was favorably known to most of the literati; he visited the Dill Pickle Club regularly and was a lavish contributor to the No-Jury Ball and other good works. But somehow he ran afoul of those two opera-lovers from the South Side, Johnny Torrio and Al Capone, and one November morning after a visit from three South Side "friends," poor Dion fell back into his carnations

with a hurt expression on his face and more slugs than anyone cared to count in his torso. Hymie Weiss, a blowtorch personality if there ever was one, succeeded to the leadership, but he fell before the chopper,[1] at the corner of State and Superior one fine autumn afternoon. Towertown became the locale of some of the most brutal gang killings in the history of Chicago's beer wars, and the intersection of Oak and Milton Streets in Little Hell became known throughout the city as "Death Corner."

There was always an ill-defined and queazy relationship between the muse in Chicago and the neolithic gangsters; partly this was due to the fact that so many of Chicago's writers were also journalists whose daily work brought them in contact with gangdom, and partly it reflected a certain perverse Sicilian interest in the arts, particularly in opera. Big Jim Colosimo, king of Chicago vice and lord of the old South Side Levee who brought both Torrio and Capone to Chicago, had ditched his wife to marry an opera singer. Whenever they were in town the opera stars sucked up the incomparable Colosimo spaghetti in his restaurant on South Wabash Avenue. His chief subaltern, Johnny Torrio, was also an opera fan and had one of the finest phonograph record collections in Chicago. After a tough evening of master-minding a highjacking or the machine-gunning of a rival gang, Johnny liked nothing better than to retire to his apartment and listen to the complete score of *Il Trovatore*. The gangsters did not appall the writers and journalists the way they did most men; they knew them personally; Chicago was a jungle anyway, and Prohibition was decidedly unpopular. Most of the journalists considered the most dangerous beasts not the prowlers of the underworld but the dinosaurs who holed up in their LaSalle Street skyscrapers and sallied forth to highjack street car franchises and utilities stock. Yerkes and

1. Machine-gun.

Insull, they would argue, stole more than Torrio and O'Banion, and hurt more innocent people doing it.

The Chicago renaissance was well past its peak by 1923, when Ben Hecht and Max Bodenheim launched the Chicago *Literary Times*. This iconoclastic journal was in newspaper format, sold for ten cents the copy, and was pure Hecht. The policy of the paper was summed up in Goethe's phrase: "Praise of another is depreciation of oneself." Little praise was meted out to anybody or anything in the *Literary Times*.

The first issue, dated March 1, 1923, saluted the home town as follows:

Chicago, the jazz baby—the reeking, cinder-ridden, joyous Baptist stronghold; Chicago, the chewing gum center of the world, the bleating, slant-headed rendezvous of half-witted newspapers, sociopaths and pants makers—in the name of the Seven Holy and Imperishable Arts, Chicago salutes you.

"Civilization overtakes us. The Philoolulu bird lies on its back with its feet in the air—extinct. The Muses, coughing and spitting, reach their arms blindly towards the steel mills and the stockyards.

"The cognoscenti pull the flypaper out of their ears. Sandburg's tom-tom sounds through the new tar-smelling subdivisions. Szukalski thrusts his walking stick into the eye-sockets of LaSalle Street, Hecht explodes an epithet under the Old Ladies Home. Beating his bosom, Anderson sinks to his baggy knees gurgling mystically to God. The cubistical Bodenheim ullulates on the horizon. Ehu! Ehu! The Pleiocene fogs are lifting.

In the same issue, the *Times* paid its respects to New York ("The National Cemetery of Arts and Letters"):

The thing that vaguely depresses us about New York is its long ears. The magazines devoted to The Higher Culture—The Nation, The Dial, The Freeman, The New Republic, The Broom, and, alas, The Little Review, stand on the rack of our favorite bookstores and, occasionally, we read them. They depress us. They have long

ears. They have long noses. They seem to be suffering from the lack of a good drink or a good physic. They are continually talking about Art as if it were their dead grandmother.

Oh, the editors had a wonderful time, particularly when they were reviewing each other's works. Max Bodenheim called Ben Hecht's *1001 Afternoons in Chicago* "the vivid etchings of a disillusioned mind, the product of the pity complex of an anti-social American;" Hecht replied with a review of Bodenheim's *Blackguard*—"as definite an experience as inhaling a quart of chlorine gas." George Grosz was doing some drawings for the paper then; Ben told his public that George reminded him of "a Rube Goldberg who has lost his temper trying to get his last nickel back in a telephone booth."

The *Times* embarked on several campaigns. One was aimed at the widely syndicated psychologist Dr. Frank Crane, and in the course of it the editors called for a literary martyr to commit suicide and leave a note blaming it on the good doctor's misbegotten advice. Another "exposed" Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom as "a vicious manic-psychosis victim who is allowed by vicious sentimentality on the part of a Southern family that owns him to blight the lives of all about him."

Well, it is all very dated now and more than faintly reminiscent of Papa Mencken (the only god the editors had); it was all in fun; and it was not for long. In two years it was all over and the editors had taken refuge in, of all places, the National Cemetery of Arts and Letters. Bodenheim beat Hecht to Greenwich Village by almost a year, and Pat Covici, who had published *The Times* as well as the works of Hecht and Bodenheim, trailed along to try his hand at publishing in New York. The Pleiocene fogs settled down again; the Chicago literary renaissance was over. One after another they all drifted away—Anderson, Dreiser, Sandburg, Alfred Kreymbourg, Floyd Dell, Burt Rascoe. In the abattoir by Lake Michigan the chatter of

machine-gun fire was no longer interrupted by the chatter of the typewriter.

Today? Well, Towertown is still a somewhat purer bohemia than Greenwich Village, which isn't saying much. Many of the artists are still there, and most of the town's better galleries are in the neighborhood. The restaurants in the area are as good as they ever were (but nowhere nearly as cheap) and there is nothing in Greenwich Village (or all New York, for that matter) to compare with the ribs at the Singapore on Rush Street, the Cantonese dishes at Don the Beachcomber's on Walton, the lobster at Ireland's, or the Stracciatella soup at Riccardo's. North Clark is still a honky-tonk heaven, and Bug-House Square across from the Newberry Library still has a full quota of radical orators, homos, and floozies in open-toed sandals. But the old Left Bank is gone here as it is in Paris and New York; writers, at any rate, prefer to live in the country these days.

Why did they leave Chicago? The city stamped them; it brought out the best there was in them, and they were never more creative than when they were working there. But none of them, even those who sang most fervently of the steel mills and the stockyards, stayed. They ridiculed New York, but most of them ended up there. Why?

Perhaps it really isn't much of a mystery. Harry Hansen says that most writers simply could not extract from Chicago's spiritual atmosphere enough oxygen upon which to live. They were set down in the midst of the most cynical and materialistic society on the face of the earth, a proudly idolatrous society that bowed openly before the Golden Calf. Chicago's tremendous energy, vitality and brutality attracted them and held them for a time, but the city was contemptuously indifferent to them, even to the ones who sang its praises, and that, in the long run, was unforgivable. Because it was indifferent it forced the writer in upon himself; his loneliness in the midst of so much bustle begat creativity; he wrote and he wrote well, but the

city didn't care; only money and power got recognition in Chicago. Hence Al Capone. Hence Samuel Insull.

So Chicago, like a civic devil's advocate, made her writers strong by resisting them. She made most of them rich, too; they came to town riding the rods and left for points east in Pullmans. But man does not live by bread alone, and no amount of success could endear the city to the writers who had suffered spiritually from its indifference. When they could they left and went where they got recognition—that is to say, to New York. But Chicago had scarred them all, and as time went on they were proud of the scars.

Today? We'll devote a chapter to that later on. Suffice it to say here that there is a cultural revival of modest proportions in the Windy City. There are the outdoor art shows in Lincoln Park and on 57th Street; there is the Civic Music Association and the Grant Park Concerts and Ravinia; there is always the magnificent Art Institute. Willard Motley, Mary Jane Ward, Nelson Algren and a goodly number of lesser talents are around town and working. The newspaper crowd is a sprightly lot—Syd Harris, Irv Kupcinet, Herman Kogan, Emmett Dedmon, Fred Babcock, Van Allen Bradley, Tony Weitzel, Claudia Cassidy, Felix Borowski, Fanny Butcher, Vincent Starrett, Charles Collins.

Will they stay? They might. The city is a bit older, a bit more mellow, a bit less gold-hungry. Probably that brief, exotic flowering of '12 to '24 will never be reproduced, but it is just barely possible that there is now enough spiritual oxygen in Chicago to keep a modest artistic and literary colony alive, and even perhaps enough to enable it to send down roots and grow.

AND CLOSE TO LIFE—*so close, from our point of view, that it keeps treading on Life's heels—is this eager, panting Art which shows us the wonder of the way as we rush along.*—MARGARET ANDERSON

Chapter II

Parnassus on the Prairie

(The "Little" Magazines)

THE ARTIFACTS of a literary renaissance are the "little" magazines, the *Tendenz* organs, the art-for-art's sake journals that document the rise of the new literature, needle the traditionalists, shelter the innovators, and lose a lot of somebody's money. Generally they are the reflections of a single personality, and always they are highly controversial. Some of them are even readable.

From the days of Zebina Eastman's *Chicago Magazine* (1857), Porkopolis has been blessed with a plentitude of "little" magazines. Only New York has spawned a larger brood, and only a New Yorker would aver that Father Knickerbocker's literary progeny are any livelier than Dad Dearborn's. Indeed, many of New York's originated and grew to maturity in Chicago (*The Dial*, *The Little Review*, etc.) moving towards the decadent seaboard only as they outgrew their "little" breeches and began to take themselves seriously. By this time, in the very nature of things, they were already dying, and most of them were decently interred not long after unpacking their orange crates full of unpublished Ezra Pound manuscripts in Greenwich Village.

The literary *aufklärung* that began in Chicago around 1912

produced two of the finest "little" magazines American literature has ever known—*The Little Review* and *Poetry—A Magazine of Verse*. Each was the reflection of a remarkable woman—*The Little Review* of Margaret Anderson, and *Poetry* of Harriet Monroe. Margaret was volatile, unpredictable, brilliantly imaginative, impatient, stubborn. Harriet was mature, serene, intelligent, and determined. The two women knew and liked each other; Chicago would have been immeasurably poorer without either.

The way was prepared for the coming of *The Little Review* and *Poetry* by *The Chap-Book*, a literary miscellany published in Chicago from 1894 to 1898 by Herbert Stuart Stone, Bliss Carman, and Harrison Garfield Rhodes. *The Chap-Book* was a very superior "little" magazine which, during its brief career, serialized Henry James' *What Maisie Knew* and presented fiction by Hamlin Garland, Arthur Morrison, Thomas Hardy and Neith Boyce. Critical essays by William Butler Yeats appeared in *The Chap-Book*, and poetry by Stephen Crane, William Vaughn Moody, Bliss Carman, Madison Cauwein, Julian Hawthorne, John Davidson, G. E. Woodberry, and Clinton Scollard. In 1898 *The Chap-Book* was absorbed by *The Dial*, which was then being published in Chicago by Francis F. Browne. In 1880 Browne had revived the old transcendentalist *Dial* which had been published from 1840 to 1844 by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller in Cambridge, and from 1880 to 1916 Browne and his sons carried on the magazine as a sedate, Emersonian fortnightly review. In 1916 Browne sold *The Dial* to Martyn Johnson, who moved it to New York and transformed it into a lively organ of the literary Left which bore about as much resemblance to Emerson's *Dial* as *The Christian Century* does to *Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang*.

In 1912 Margaret Anderson hit Chicago with an impact only slightly less devastating than that of the fire of 1871. Her well-to-do parents didn't approve of her determination to come to Chicago, and so she sold her calfskin-bound Ibsen and two ex-

quisite silk negligees to raise the train fare from Columbus, Indiana. She was twenty-one, and very sure of herself. At the last minute her sister Lois decided to come with her, and the familial climate ameliorated somewhat when it was learned that the girls proposed to live in the YWCA (the last place in the world anyone would look for Margaret Anderson.) Margaret herself describes their arrival:

> From the train we hurried to Orchestra Hall for our first Chicago Symphony concert (Frederick Stock conducting), and I knew that I was the happiest person in the world. We were there early, bought 25¢ seats, ran without stopping up the hundred and ten steps to the gallery and were seated in the first row in time to hear the tuning up. Bruno Steindal, first 'cellist, was soloist and played the Bach Air on the G String. When the first strains came floating up to the heaven of the gallery I put my head on the railing and wept as one only weeps a few times in one's life.[1]

Margaret had previously had some contact with the book review editor of a small Presbyterian magazine published in Chicago called *Interior*, and this good lady gave her a job reviewing books. The pay was small, but could be supplemented by selling the review copies to second-hand bookstores. This sinecure ended when Margaret reviewed a book by Theodore Dreiser without once mentioning the word "immoral." Actually, Margaret didn't care much for Dreiser ("no more wit than a cow") but in the resulting imbroglio she defended him stoutly as a significant writer. The Presbyterians insisted on the "immoral" tag, which Margaret refused to affix. As a result, her tenuous connection with Calvinism was severed abruptly. She promptly got a job as a clerk in Browne's bookshop on the seventh floor of the Fine Arts Building and, since this was the same Francis Browne who published *The Dial*, she also doubled as book-reviewer for that magazine. Browne proved to be as try-

1. Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War* (New York: Covici-Friede, 1930), p. 19.

ing as the Presbyterians but in a somewhat different way. He went about quoting romantic poetry and one day Margaret supplied him with a last line that he'd forgotten; this led to the discovery of a mutual interest in romantic poetry which, on Browne's part, deteriorated rapidly into an over-emphasis on the "romantic" side. He tried to kiss his pretty young clerk, and, while he was suitably apologetic later, Margaret decided she'd better move on. However, she and Browne remained friends and she always professed the highest regard for him.

About this time, the inspiration for *The Little Review* descended upon Margaret:

> I had been curiously depressed all day. In the night I wakened. First precise thought: I know why I'm depressed—nothing inspired is going on. Second: I demand that life be inspired every moment. Third: the only way to guarantee this is to have inspired conversation every moment. Fourth: most people never get so far as conversation; they haven't the stamina, and there is no time. Fifth: if I had a magazine I could spend my time filling it up with the best conversation the world has to offer. Sixth: marvelous idea—salvation. Seventh: decision to do it. Deep sleep.[2]

For Margaret, inspiration meant action. She converted a young Chicago journalist to the idea of a magazine, and he rashly pledged a portion of his monthly salary to the project. Margaret descended upon New York, collected $450 worth of advertising from unwary publishers, raced back to Chicago, set up an office in the Fine Arts Building, and announced the first issue of *The Little Review*. It would be, she said, "a magazine written for intelligent people who can feel; whose philosophy is Applied Anarchism; whose policy is a Will to Splendor of Life."[3] From March 1914 to 1929, when the market for "inspired conversation" fell off, *The Little Review* was the bellwether of the *avant-garde* in American letters.

Margaret later thought that the first issue of *The Little Re-*

2. *Ibid*, p. 35.
3. Announcement in the first issue of *The Little Review*, March, 1914.

view was "adolescent," but actually it was an excellent beginning. Margaret herself contributed an ambitious article about the relationship between Life and Art, replete with references to Paderewski, Galsworthy, William Vaughn Moody, and Rupert Brooke. Floyd Dell, then editor of the Chicago *Evening Post's* literary page, supplied a little essay on how love and work are good for women, and also greeted the new venture with an ecstatic editorial in the newspaper. Llewellyn Jones, George Burman Foster, George Soule, and Sherwood Anderson were represented, and a Vachel Lindsay poem told "How A Little Girl Danced." Eunice Tietjens had some sad little verses, and Arthur Davison Ficke rounded out the issue with five poems.

From then on, everything was grist to Margaret Anderson's "inspirational" mill—Futurism, Bergsonism, the new Paganism, Imagism, Dadaism, Anarchism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis. The experimentalists were *The Little Review's* gods—Baudelaire, Huysmans, Mallarmé and Rimbaud; Pater and Wilde; Poe and Edgar Saltus. Nietzsche and Emma Goldman were minor deities—Emma had converted Margaret to anarchism. Ben Hecht and Max Bodenheim affixed themselves to Margaret's entourage; the former with his "pale green face," contributed some of his *1001 Afternoons in Chicago* to the magazine and also wrote a few editorials under a pseudonym. In 1915, Hecht anticipated Philip Wylie's animadversions against "Mom" with a satirical essay on "The American Family." It was a rare issue that did not have at least one Bodenheim poem, although Margaret did not quite understand Max and the long, white malodorous pipe with the blue ribbon tied in a bow about its stem which he affected. Sherwood Anderson was frequently in the magazine; so were Eunice Tietjens, Vachel Lindsay, and A. D. Ficke. Later, when Ezra Pound became the "foreign correspondent" of *The Little Review* as well as of *Poetry*, he brought James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, Hart Crane, Richard Aldington, T. S. Eliot, John Rodker, and Wyndham Lewis with-

in the supercharged orbit of the magazine, making it for a while something like a house organ for the London "Imagists." During this period James Joyce's *Ulysses* was serialized for the first time, blowing up a storm which resulted in a conviction on a charge of publishing obscene matter and a fine of $100.

During all this time the magazine came out by guess and by God. There was never enough money, and only Margaret's unique (hardly the word!) personality kept it afloat. She was monumentally self-assured, and even when completely broke she had that aura of self-contained superiority which cowed tradespeople and bill collectors and which reminds us of Scott Fitzgerald's line to the effect that "the rich are different than we are." Margaret had been born to wealth and she bore herself like a wealthy woman even when she was flatter than a Madison Street panhandler. Harry Hansen describes her as follows:

> She was always exquisite, as if emerging from a scented boudoir, not from a mildewed tent or a camp where frying bacon was scenting the atmosphere. She was always vivid, is yet, and beautiful to look upon, and lovely in her mind. There is a sort of high, wind-blown beauty about her; her fluffy hair blows marvelously, her eyes are in Lake Michigan's best blue. And she is valiant, always.[4]

Valiant she had to be! Hansen's point about the "mildewed tent" was well-taken, for Margaret, unable to pay rent, had moved her residence to a tent pitched on the beach up on the North Shore. Here she, her sister, her sister's children, a cook, and the cook's child stayed all one spring, summer, and fall, cooking over a campfire and washing their clothes in the lake. Margaret's entire wardrobe consisted of a hat, a blue-tailored suit, and a crepe georgette blouse, which she washed out every night in the lake. But there were never any complaints; she always looked well-groomed, and stepped down the Boul'

4. Harry Hansen, *Midwest Portraits* (New York: Harcourt-Brace and Co., 1923), p. 105.

Mich with an eye-catching walk that snarled traffic. Ben Hecht and Max Bodenheim would hike all the way up from Chicago to see her, and, not finding her in, would pin little poems to her tent. Sherwood Anderson came to tell his "Mamma Geighen" story around the evening campfire. ("Mamma Geighen" ran a saloon in Wisconsin; Anderson's story about her was hilarious but unprintable.) Eunice Tietjens came, to be charmed out of a diamond ring for *The Little Review*, and Harriet Dean, up from Indiana, was mesmerized into donating time and money. Unknown individuals (usually men) stopped Margaret on the street, asked her to lunch, and urged her to talk about her "ideals." The next day she would get a $100 check for her "ideals."[5]

After *The Little Review* embraced Emma Goldman and Anarchism, the few advertisers the magazine had began to bridle. This was understandable; in the December 1915 issue Margaret's editorial was concerned with the recent execution of the labor "martyr," Joe Hillstrom, in Utah. Joe subsequently was the inspiration for one of the most poignant of all labor songs, the one that begins:

"I dreamt I saw Joe Hill last night"

and that ends with a call to "go out and organize!" The ethics of the Joe Hill case are as obscure today as they were in 1915, but anyway Joe was dead and *The Little Review* thundered:

"Why didn't someone shoot the governor of Utah before he could shoot Joe Hill?"

Margaret was really impatient. She concluded her editorial:

"For God's sake, why doesn't *someone* start the revolution?"

This was a bit too rugged for Marshall Field, Carson, Pirie, and Scott, and Mandel Brothers. It was a bit too rugged for the city fathers, too. They sent some detectives to apprehend this dangerous inciter-to-riot. Margaret wasn't in when the detec-

5. Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazines* (Princeton U. Press, 1946), p. 56.

tives arrived, but a gentleman of substance who was thinking of investing some money in the magazine was at her apartment (she was living in town at this time) waiting for her. He took the minions of the law downtown for a drink and persuaded them that Margaret was really nothing but a flighty society girl who was just showing off.

In the June-July 1915 number of *The Little Review*, Margaret sought to lure advertising by a form of literary seduction. She ran several pages, blank except for a box in the center. The box would read as follows:

> Mandel Brothers might have taken this page to feature their library furnishings, desk sets and accessories—of which they are supposed to have the most interesting assortment in town. I learned that on the authority of someone who referred to Mandel's as "the most original and artistic store in Chicago." If they should advertise those things here I have no doubt the 1000 Chicago subscribers to The Little Review would overflow their store.

> Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company ought to advertise something, though I don't know just what. The man I interviewed made such a face when I told him we were "radical" that I haven't had the courage to go back and pester him for the desired full-page. The Carson-Pirie attitude towards change of any sort is well-known—I think they resent even having to keep pace with the change in fashions.

This wily stratagem was not notably successful. Margaret was much more fortunate in repelling creditors. When the printer howled for his money, she would send him a check for all she had—5¢. The printer would be nonplussed and rendered immobile for a valuable period. When the manager of the Fine Arts Building demanded a payment of the rent, she would blandly write him a check. A few days later he would be back:

"Miss Anderson, your check has come back from the bank marked 'no funds'."

"Well?"

"It's the check you gave me for the rent."

"I know. I never said it was any good."

"But——"

"You didn't say it had to be a good check. You just asked me to write a check for the rent."

Margaret Anderson was probably the only woman in Chicago who could do things like that without making people mad.

For some three years, Margaret Anderson stood Chicago on its head. She was always up to something, and you could invariably strike up an interesting conversation at Schlogl's by asking the gang: "Where's Margaret? What's she doing now? What's happening to *The Little Review?*" Often Margaret would be there herself, or if not, her cronies Harriet Dean or Eunice Tietjens would be, or Ben Hecht or Max Bodenheim or Sherwood Anderson, or some of the rest of *The Little Review* crowd. Brilliantly they defended cubism, futurism, expressionism. Brilliantly they attacked lyricism, traditionalism, and *The Dial.*

During her anarchist period, Margaret had acquired a large, lovely apartment on Ainslie Street overlooking the lake, financed by her parents. They had come on from Indiana to live with her, but later her father had died and she and her mother had tiffed. Her mother had thereupon departed for

Indiana, taking every stick of furniture in the apartment with her. Margaret loved the big, empty apartment—furnished with nothing but her Mason and Hamlin piano and two beds (the other one for her sister, who had elected to stay on). When Emma Goldman came to town, Margaret invited her to stay at the Ainslie Street apartment. Emma sent a polite little note of declination; the bourgeois home depressed her; she never stayed in homes. Margaret hastened to assure her that this was no bourgeois home or indeed any home at all, but a big old apartment with a glorious view of the lake and no furniture. Emma finally agreed to come up and look at it. She was enchanted with its emptiness. Could she call a few comrades? But of course! Within the hour a cadre of Chicago's top anarchists was storming through the house, admiring the view, drinking Margaret's liquor, chanting folksongs, denouncing the capitalists. Dr. Ben Reitman, the old Haymarket rioter and associate of Spies, Ling, and the other alleged bomb-throwers was there, his long mustaches twitching with excitement. Big Bill Haywood sat quietly, looking out at the lake. Someone recited Walt Whitman's "Come lovely and smiling death," and brought a tear to Big Bill's one blue eye. Margaret played the piano. "You are a very great artist," said Emma.

It was all so wonderful, so inspirational.

The Little Review cannot go down in history as the discoverer of much new and exciting talent. Sherwood Anderson and Ben Hecht—perhaps. But it *did* stand in the foreground as an organ of literary criticism, and it *was* experimental. Margaret herself composed, for one issue, three pages of sound and color combinations made up from Imagist poetry and supposed to represent the state which the modern piano should attain. When contributions did not seem up to par, the editor would leave the pages blank—the September 1916 number contained blanks save for two pages of pen and ink cartoons depicting Margaret and her new associate editor, Jane Heap,

vacationing in California. *The Little Review*, too, was not above an occasional touch of humor, printing this plaintive poem of its favorite poet with a straight face in the September 1914 number:

My Middle Name

My middle name rhymes not with satchel,
So please do not pronounce it "Vatchel,"
My middle name rhymes not with rock hell,
So please do not pronounce it "Vock Hell,"
My middle name rhymes not with hash hell,
So please do not pronounce it "Vasch Hell,"
My middle name rhymes not with bottle,
So please do not pronounce it "Vottle,"
My middle name is just the same as Rachel.
With V for R;
Please call me Vachel.

NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

In short, *The Little Review*, its editors, and its contributors were delightful.

When Margaret migrated to New York in 1917 and then to Paris in 1922, *The Little Review* inevitably declined. Dadaism and surrealism killed it. The "inspiring conversations" dribbled off into didactic nonsense by the Seine, and in 1929 *The Little Review* breathed its last, its eulogy the tart comment by Associate Editor Jane Heap that "you can't get race horses from mules. I do not believe that the conditions of our life can produce men who can give us masterpieces."[6]

Among the "little" magazines, none has a longer or more honorable history than *Poetry—A Magazine of Verse*. It was back in 1911 that Harriet Monroe went to her aristocratic friend and fellow-Chicagoan, Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, with the request that he get one hundred of his wealthy friends to sub-

6. Jane Heap, "Lost—A Renaissance," *The Little Review*, May, 1929.

scribe $50 each so that a poetry magazine might be founded in Chicago. Heaven knows something of the sort was needed; there was no literary organ devoted to poetry, and the established "quality" magazines like *Harpers*, *Scribners*, and the *Atlantic* bought only a few verse tidbits a month, and those by such hacksters as Margaret Prescott Montague, Fannie Stearns Davis, Florence Converse, and Margaret Sherwood. There was a new and more vigorous poetry waiting to be born and Harriet Monroe knew it, but there was obviously no room for the pregnant muse at the traditonal literary inns.

Hobart Chatfield Chatfield-Taylor was a wealthy literary figure who was beginning to calm down after a waggish youth. Chatfield-Taylor's friends subscribed the necessary money and in September, 1912, Harriet Monroe gently placed the manuscript for *Poetry's* first issue in the hands of her friend, the artist and publisher, Ralph Fletcher Seymour. The following month Volume I, No. 1 of *Poetry—A Magazine of Verse* appeared in an attractive format of red, grey, gold and black, designed by Seymour. Its thirty-two pages contained William Vaughn Moody's "I Am The Woman," Arthur Davison Ficke's "Poetry," Helen Dudley's "To An Unknown," Grace Hazard Conkling's "Symphony of a Mexican Garden," and Ezra Pound's "To Whistler—American," in which the expatriate spoke of his fellow countrymen as "that mass of dolts."

It was a medium-good beginning, good enough to draw a shower of appreciative letters and contributions (of poems, not money) from poets and would-be poets all over the country. Harriet Monroe had previously written to all the better-known poets inviting them to contribute and promising—*mirabile dictu!*—to pay for what was accepted. The critics received the new publication with mixed emotions, Chicago and the Midwest generally acclaiming it and the Eastern pundits viewing it with tongue in cheek. The latter professed to see something humorous in the muse domiciling in slaughterhouse Chicago;

one Philadelphia paper headlined its editorial on the subject "Poetry in Porkopolis" and proclaimed that "Chicago loves poetry. It uses the proceeds of pork for the promotion of poetry . . . "

The indefatigable Harriet, pleased at the reception the poets gave the new enterprise and not giving a tinker's dam for the jibes of the effete East, went ahead with her second issue. Alice Corbin Henderson, a fine poet and intelligent critic, was prevailed upon to come down from Lake Bluff and act as Associate Editor. An advisory committee was set up consisting of Edith Wyatt, a friend of Harriet's and author of *True Love*, a novel, as well as of poems and critical articles; Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, and Henry B. Fuller, author of *A Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani*, *The Cliff-Dwellers* and satiric plays and novels. Fuller did all the proofreading and indexing; a shy, sensitive fellow, he would slither into Ralph Seymour's office in the Fine Arts Building like "a cat afraid of getting its feet wet in the stream of life," and breathlessly await the proof sheets. He did not consider himself a poet, but after reading Edgar Lee Master's *Spoon River Anthology*, he declared: "Pooh, I can do better than that!" And he did (almost) with a volume of poems called *Lines Long and Short*. In *Poetry's* early days, Henry B. Fuller was indispensable.

The critical japes from the Eastern seaboard got under the skin of a young poet and critic then living in London—Ezra Pound. Pound, a congenital esthete, had found the cultural air of his native Idaho too thin to sustain him and had migrated to England after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania. There he wrote his *Personae* and *Exultations*, managing to be understandable only when belaboring the uncouth peasants of his native land. As a critic, however, he achieved a certain stature that brought him the friendship of men like William B. Yeats, Rabindranath Tagore, Floyd Dell, Ford Madox Ford, and T. S. Eliot. He could not write first-rate poetry but he

could tell it when he saw it, and in those days no young poet anywhere could ignore him. Practically every writer who passed through London knocked at the door of his modest lodgings in Church Walk, even such thoroughly American poets as Robert Frost and Amy Lowell sitting at his feet. He made no pretense of being anything but a cultural snob (he once wrote to Harriet: "I don't love my fellow man, and I don't propose to pretend to.") but he *did* look forward to an American literary *Risorgimento* "that will make the Italian Renaissance look like a tempest in a teapot," with himself as a sort of government-in-exile preparing the assault.

Pound had been enthusiastic about *Poetry* from the first, and when the New York and Boston papers treated the magazine as something of a joke, he wrote to Harriet offering to "riposte upon them from an unexpected quarter." She then asked him to be the magazine's "foreign editor," a post which he seized upon avidly. In fact, it was probably as *Poetry's* European correspondent that Ezra Pound achieved whatever measure of honorable distinction history may accord him. His first scoop was getting the American copyright on the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, and *Poetry's* third issue was a beautiful ideological potpourri with Tagore's six "Gitanjali" (translated by himself from the Bengali) flanked by five austere Yeats lyrics, and a ballad called "Sangar" written by a young unknown named John Reed in honor of Lincoln Steffens. Other Pound discoveries subsequently published in *Poetry* were Richard Aldington, H. D., and William Carlos Williams. Yeats had a very high opinion of Ezra, and when *Poetry's* first annual prize of $250 was awarded to him, he returned $200 of it with the suggestion that it be given to Pound. And Floyd Dell saluted the expatriate Idahoan as "the most enchanting poet alive" in the Chicago *Evening Post.*

Ezra's greatest discovery was Thomas Stearns Eliot, like himself an American who preferred London to the States. It

was early in 1915 that Pound extracted from Eliot the manuscript of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and the June issue of *Poetry* in that year led off with the lines that begin:

> Let us go then, you and I,
> When the evening is spread out against the sky
> Like a patient etherized upon a table——

and that conclude:

> We have lingered by the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

The publication of "Prufrock" drew a fearsome blast from the traditionalists. William Rose Benét assailed the London clique with a letter to *The Dial* on "Poetry By The Pound," and Louis Untermeyer wrote Harriet that "Prufrock" was "the muse in a psychopathic ward drinking the stale dregs of revolt." Untermeyer, however, had come over onto Eliot's side by the time "The Waste Land" was published in *The Dial* and had won a $2,000 prize. Nothing succeeds like success!

But Ezra Pound was not the only member of *Poetry's* staff to be uncovering new and exciting poetic talent. Harriet had set up headquarters at 543 North Cass Street on the Near North Side, and here she mothered the young poets, brewing hot chocolate for them over a wood fire in the back yard and sewing buttons on their clothes. She sent them away feeling better even when she could find little to praise in their verse. *Poetry's* pages were open to all and Frost, Benét, Conrad Aiken, Joyce Kilmer, and Edwin Arlington Robinson, all poets to whom no tendency towards radical experimentalism could be imputed, were duly and joyously published.

In 1912 "the iron cat" arrived in Chicago—Carl Sandburg.

No poet then, he had come down from Milwaukee to work on the old Socialist *World*, bringing his wife and two daughters. It was his wife, "that Steichen girl," who shipped a batch of his poems off to 543 North Cass, where Harriet and Alice Corbin Henderson read them with fascinated trepidation. *Poetry* battened down the hatches, and in 1914 published the lines to Chicago that begin:

> Hog Butcher for the World,
> Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
> Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight
> Handler;
> Stormy, husky, brawling,
> City of the Big Shoulders:——

With the publication of his "Chicago Poems," Sandburg discovered that he had jumped with both feet into the exact middle of a transoceanic imbroglio over something called "imagism." The coterie around Pound in London was turning out a form of *vers libre* to which they had given the name of "imagism." It represented a revolt against the flowery language of Victorianism, insisting that the traditional lyricism "dulled the image." The "imagists" refused to use any word that did not contribute to the presentation of "the image," and went all the way back to Sappho, Catullus, and Villon for their inspiration. *Poetry* had come part way into the "imagist" camp with the publication of Richard Aldington's "Choricos" in its second number, and had continued publishing the "imagist" poems and critical articles of Pound, Aldington, H. D., and William Carlos Williams. Amy Lowell had made a pilgrimage to London and had come back an enthusiastic "imagist" (she was later to anger Ezra by beating him to the punch and editing an "imagist" anthology).

The great Yeats gave what is perhaps the most intelligible

interpretation of what the Londoners were getting at when he explained: "We tried to strip away everything that was artificial, to get a style like speech, as simple as the simplest prose, like a cry of the heart . . . " T. S. Eliot and most of the younger poets were, of course, eager "imagists," and the group got out one edition of an "imagist" critical quarterly called *Blast*, which was edited by Pound and Wyndham Lewis.

The Victorians were not without defenders. William Rose Benét, Conrad Aiken, Madison Cauwein, and *The Dial* led the counter-charge of the traditionalists against the new poetry and against *Poetry's* defense of it, although Benét and Aiken were personally friendly to Harriet and continued to appear in *Poetry*.

Sandburg, of course, was greeted with open arms by the "imagists" and poor Carl, who probably did not know an "imagist" from an oleander, found himself being blasted to a fare-thee-well by the Victorians. *The Dial* assailed Carl as follows:

> The typographical arrangement for this jargon ("Chicago") creates a suspicion that it is intended to be taken as some form of poetry, and the suspicion is confirmed by the fact that it stands in the forefront of the latest issue of a futile little periodical described as "a magazine of verse". . . . such an effusion as the one now under consideration is nothing less than an impudent affront to the poetry-loving public.

The usually mild Harriet struck back at *The Dial* with an editorial entitled "The Enemies We Have Made," in which she said:

> It is possible that we have ventured rashly in "discovering" Mr. Sandburg and the others, but—whom and what has *The Dial* discovered? We have taken chances, made room for the young and new, tried to break the chains which enslave Chicago to New York, America to Europe, and the present to the past. What chances has *The Dial* ever taken? What has it ever printed but echoes? For

thirty years it has run placidly along in this turbulent city of Chicago, gently murmuring the accepted opinions of such leaders of thought as "The Athenaeum" and "The Spectator." During all that third of a century it has borne about as much relation to the intellectual life of this vast, chaotically rich region as though it were printed in Glasgow or Caracas. Not only has it failed to grasp a great opportunity—it has been utterly blind and deaf to it, has never known the opportunity was there. Is its editor competent to define the word "futile"?

The Chicago newspapers supported *Poetry* and Carl Sandburg 100%. "Our Sandburg is no Milton, just as Schoenberg is no Beethoven," cried the *Record-Herald*. Regional disloyalty was imputed to *The Dial*, and within three years it had folded its tent and slipped away to New York. There it was later reborn as an organ of the literary left to which even "imagism" was old hat. The "imagist" controversy itself raged until early in the 1920's, with *Poetry* defending the innovators and printing their verses alongside those of the lyricists.

The discoveries came thick and fast in those days. One of the first—and best—was the big, breezy versifier from downstate Illinois named Nicholas Vachel Lindsay. Harriet had accepted some of his "moon poems" in 1912 and, grateful for recognition, he had rushed up to Chicago to see her. He turned out to be a restless and foot-loose mystic who traveled hither and yon across the country, exchanging his poems for a meal or a night's lodging—a medieval troubador ill at ease in the 20th century. He wrote his "General Booth Enters Heaven" while tramping in the Southwest and its publication in *Poetry* brought him his first critical acclaim as well as $22 in cold cash. At the banquet which *Poetry* gave for W. B. Yeats at the Cliff-Dwellers' Club in Chicago early in 1914, Lindsay was asked to make a pretty little speech, but that was beyond him, so he asked permission to recite his latest poem, of which he said:

Much has gone into it—the Dahomey dancers at the World's Fair, the story of the Pygmies and the Mountains of the Moon in Stanley's darkest Africa, Joseph Conrad's haunting African sketches full of fever and voodoo and marsh, Mark Twain's assault on King Leopold, and the race riots in Springfield, Illinois several years ago, and The Souls of Black Folk, by Burghardt DuBois, and the recent death of a missionary on the Congo known and loved by many of my friends . . . very much condensed into a rag-time epic that takes about seven minutes.

Permission granted. After a long and artful speech by Yeats, the awkward Lindsay arose and rattled the windows with the measured boom of his voice. He stole the show, and "The Congo," following "General Booth Enters Heaven," stamped Vachel Lindsay as one of the world's great poets.

There were other notable "firsts" — Helen Hoyt's "Ellis Park," Agnes Lee's "A Statue in a Garden," Amy Lowell's "A Lady," James Stephens' "Dark Wings," Sara Teasdale's "Morning," Edna St. Vincent Millay's "God's World," T. S. Eliot's "La Figlia che Piange." *Poetry* never published anything that had ever been previously published anywhere. And World War I brought the tragic young soldier-poets—Rupert Brooke, Alan Seeger, Joyce Kilmer. Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" first appeared in *Poetry*, although Harriet disapproved strongly of "nest of robins"; the author got $6 for it and was grateful. It was all the money either he or the magazine ever made out of those lines that the world was to clasp to its heart, for six months after publication Kilmer was killed in Picardy.

The '20's, as stated before, were halcyon days on the Lake Michigan littoral. *Poetry* moved from North Cass to 232 E. Erie Street, and here to sign the guest book and sip hot chocolate came a host of versifiers—Glenway Westcott, Emanual Carnevali, Yvor Winters, Marianne Moore, Robert Graves, Louise Bogan, Lew Sarrett, Witter Bynner, Malcolm Cowley,

Lynn Riggs, Eunice Tietjens, Elinor Wylie, and many others. Some, like the above, were to be heard from; most were to sink back into obscurity. But they came, and Harriet mothered them all. Some who thought of themselves as poets were to make reputations in other fields—Robert Penn Warren, Merrill Moore, Archibald MacLeish, Ernest Hemingway, Frederic Prokosch, and Ben Hecht.

There was a cheap little Italian restaurant around the corner from 232 E. Erie in those days that served a bottle of *vin ordinaire,* red or white, with the table d'hote dinner, and here for a meal and a long afternoon of conversation on any given day one might find Harriet Monroe, Marion Stroble (a socially-prominent Chicagoan who was later to serve the magazine in an editorial capacity), Gertrude Udell (the business manager), Vachel Lindsay, Sara Teasdale, Carl Sandburg, Lew Sarrett, Maxwell Bodenheim, Arthur Davison Ficke, Witter Bynner, George Dillon and Mrs. William Vaughn Moody. Mrs. Moody later opened a restaurant on Michigan Avenue called "The Petit Gourmet," and here on certain "Poetry Nights," the poets would come and recite their verses to diners who paid $1 for the privilege of hearing them. The money thus accrued would go to the poet who read.

Most of the poets, of course, were poor. Some who were later to become rich and famous were, in those days, not above dunning Harriet for the pittance *Poetry* paid them for their verse, and the files of the magazine are filled with letters which sound quaint today but were undoubtedly written in considerable desperation like this one:

139 Waverly Place
New York City.

Dear Harriet Monroe:

Spring is here—and I could be very happy, except that I am broke. Would you mind paying me now instead of on publication

for those so stunning verses of mine which you have? I am become very, very thin and have taken to smoking Virginia tobacco.

Wistfully yours,
Edna St. Vincent Millay

P.S. I am *awfully* broke.
Would you mind paying me a lot?

Harriet Monroe died in 1936 at the age of 77 while trying to climb a mountain in Peru, and it seemed as though *Poetry*, the only child she ever had, might die with her. Could there be a *Poetry* without the kindly little old lady whose deceptive frailty had concealed so much iron? It was touch and go, but *Poetry* finally righted itself and went on with people who had been friends of Harriet's carrying on the work in various capacities—Marion Stroble, Gertrude Udell, George Dillon, Morton Dauwen Zabel, Hayden Carruth, and Karl Shapiro. Pegasus missed the sure, familiar hand at the reins, but galloped on towards new fields and new controversies.

When the storm over the Bollingen Award and Ezra Pound broke in 1949, anyone familiar with the old "imagist" feud of 36 years before might have been pardoned for saying "This is where I came in." For here, with a few minor changes, was the same old cast reciting the same old lines. Substitute "new criticism" for "imagist" and the *Saturday Review of Literature* for *The Dial,* and you have basically the same Donnybrook that split poetry in the years between 1912 and 1924—the traditionalists in bitter counterattack on the avant-garde, and now, as then, centering their thrust on the avant-garde's most vulnerable heel—Ezra Pound. In 1949, as thirty years before, little *Poetry* was charged with defending the avant-gardeists and with providing them an organ for their heresy.

The traditionalists found out long ago that Ezra Pound made an excellent target. He has always been an arrogant, frustrated esthete whose poetry was unintelligible except to an elite that loved to figure out his tortured symbolism as one would de-

cipher an acrostic. His occasional flashes of critical brilliance have brought him powerful friends like Yeats and Eliot, but they have only emphasized the general darkness in which he has always dwelt. It was inevitable that his contempt for his fellowmen would lead him to fascism, but that which we now call fascism was, in the days before Hitler, somewhat admired in the individual if not in the group; that attitude towards life had only rhetorical blood on it, and it made of Pound a "character." Superimpose frustration on arrogant egotism and you have a path leading in a straight line to the snake pit. (But that Ezra is crazy enough to escape trial and rate confinement is disputable and some able psychiatrists are now disputing it.) If he is crazy now, he has always been crazy, but he is older now, which of course makes a difference. Meanwhile, he studies Chinese at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, and reads the books his friends send him.

Poetry, now under the able editorship of Karl Shapiro, is no more the organ of the "new esthetes" (Pound, Eliot et al.) than it was the organ of the imagists (Pound, Eliot et al.). It continues to publish the "new esthetes" (really the old "imagists") alongside of such old favorites and non-imagists as Witter Bynner, Edna St. Vincent Millay, John Gould Fletcher, Muriel Rukeyser. And it publishes also those poets who will be known tomorrow—H. R. Hays, William Jay Smith, John Malcolm Brinnin, A. M. Klein, Patrick Anderson and many others.

With a circulation of only 4000, *Poetry* is certainly a "little" magazine. However, 3000 manuscripts per month flow into its newly acquired office on Lake Shore Drive, and payment at the rate of 50¢ a line flows back to the fortunate, just as in Harriet's day. The annual *Poetry* prizes are still given, and a new "teaching supplement" edited by John Frederick Nims goes out from *Poetry* to teachers of literature in schools and colleges to assist them in teaching poetry. Until recently, the cover of the magazine carried the motto from Walt Whitman

that had graced it from the first issue: "To have great poets there must be great audiences too."

Poetry has the great poets, but it still seeks the great audiences.

Currently, the only surviving "little" magazines in Chicago besides *Poetry* are *The Kapustkan*, "An American Journal of Discovery," a mimeographed monthly written mostly by its editors, Bruce and Stan Lee Kapustka; and *Trend*, published at the University of Chicago. The latter is hospitable to "writers who are doing new things in verse and prose," and is ably edited by John W. Barnes. Up until 1948 the sprightly semanticist organ called *ETC* was published down at the University and edited by the eminent semanticist S. I. Hayakawa.

It would be interesting to go back and examine some of the "little" literary lights that have illumined the Chicago scene—Vincent Starrett's *The Wave*, for instance, or Jack Jones' *The Dill Pickler*, or Sterling North's and the University of Chicago Poetry Club's *The Forge*. There's a book to be written on them, and a lot of first-class writing to be exhumed and reappraised. But this, unhappily, is not the place to do it. The author offers the idea without charge or royalty to some enterprising searcher for a Ph.D. in English.

Meanwhile, the very existence of such magazines, for however brief a period, in the midst of our utilitarian culture, attests the truth of the lines that Harriet Monroe once wrote: ". . . that life is magnificent, and that now and then it offers golden moments which shake out the soul like a banner in the wind."

TAKE YOUR GODDAMNED *feet off my desk, Abe.*—JOSEPH MEDILL *to Abraham Lincoln*

Chapter III

Saints, Sinners and Schlogl's

JOE MEDILL'S curt command to Abe Lincoln to remove his large brogans from the Medill mahogany is quoted here not because it was typical of the *Tribune* editor alone, but because it epitomizes the independence, sometimes approaching anarchy, of the Fourth Estate in Chicago. Medill said it, but it might just as well have been Wilbur F. Storey of the *Times* addressing General Burnside, Walter Howey of the *Examiner* rebuking almost anyone, or Col. Robert R. McCormick sassing Harry Truman. There would have been one small difference—Medill and Lincoln were friends from the summer's day in 1855 that the gangling downstate lawyer appeared at Medill's office to take out a year's subscription to the *Tribune*.

The history of Chicago newspaperdom is yet to be written, but when some intrepid scribe does essay the task he will find the material rich, racy, and voluminous. No other city has gestated, spawned, and orphaned a livelier set of journals and a more colorful array of editors, reporters, correspondents, and columnists. For more than a hundred years a hilarious collection of goggle-mouthed bumpkins in button shoes has flowed into the Chicago matrix from Indiana, downstate Illinois, and the cornlands across the Mississippi, to be metamorphosed by the city into crack foreign correspondents, superlative editors

and feature writers, acidulous critics, and slick, upper-bracket novelists. And the process is still going on.

When that history of Chicago newspaperdom is written, it will have to begin on November 26, 1833. That was the day that a brash young man from Watertown, New York, by the name of James Calhoun, issued Vol. I, No. 1 of the Chicago *Democrat* from a building at what is now Clark and South Water Street. This first issue of Chicago's first paper featured an account of a pow-wow between the Sac, Fox, and Sioux Indians and was reprinted in its entirety from the St. Louis *Times*. The editorial (the only original thing in the paper) was an impassioned plea for the construction of a canal or a railroad between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi. Calhoun died in 1859, and Long John Wentworth, a Dartmouth man who was later to be mayor and one of the great figures in Chicago history, took over the *Democrat*.

Après Le Democrat, le déluge. The papers, like the immigrants from the East, came fast and furious. The *American* arrived in 1835, the *Weekly Tribune* in 1840, the *Union Agriculturist* and *Prairie Farmer* in 1841, the *Express* in 1842, the *Quid Nunc* (first penny paper west of the Alleghanies) and the *Republican* also in 1842, the *Daily Journal* in 1844, and in that same year the *Gem of the Prairie*, a weekly of "Literary Miscellany and General Intelligence." This organ, later purchased by the *Tribune*, survives today in the Book Section of the *Tribune*. The *Tribune* itself was founded in 1847, hard on the heels of the *Spirit of Temperance Reform*, which first saw the light of day in 1845, and the *Illinois Staats Zeitung*, which first appeared in 1848. Of this clutch, some were dailies, some were weeklies, and most were not for long.

When you get by the *Commercial Advertiser*, the *Temperance Battle-Ax*, etc., you begin to get into the solid stuff—the *Times*, founded in 1854 as a Democratic rival to the Republican *Tribune*, the *Morning Post*, founded in 1860, the *Republican*

(with Charles A. Dana as editor) founded in 1860, J. Young Scammon's great *Inter-Ocean*, established in 1872, and the *Daily News*, with Melville E. Stone as editor-publisher, coming along in 1875. Later there would be others—the Hearst *Examiner*, the *Herald*, the *Record-Herald*, the *Herald-Examiner*, the *American*, and the rest. Mixed up in all these were any number of famous newspaper names—Wilbur Storey, Charles A. Dana, Joe Medill, Victor Lawson, H. H. Kohlsaat, Joe Patterson, Henry Ten Eyck, Jim Keeley, Walter Howey, Julian Mason, E. S. Beck, Henry Justin Smith, Robert R. McCormick, Walter Strong, J. Loy Maloney. It's a colorful crew—let the future historian sort them out and arrange them in proper sequence.

But since this is not a history of journalism in Chicago and we have to draw the line somewhere, let's limit our consideration here to the two papers with the longest continuous history of publication—the *Tribune* and the *Daily News*. Not that the others do not deserve attention, because they do; but—let's face it—the *Tribune* and the *Daily News* alone of the papers that survive today are identified with the kind of personal journalism that makes a newspaper great. They have been associated with the life of the town longer and more integrally than any of the other sheets now being published. The Hearst papers in Chicago have employed some first-class newspapermen like Ring Lardner and Walter Howey, and the old *Examiner*, at any rate, had considerable political influence. The Hearst papers also had Ashton Stevens for most of his life, which means that they had the best, the wisest dramatic criticism in town, if not in the country. The Thomason tabloid *Times* was a sprightly little number while it lasted, and it bequeathed to the present Marshall Field *Sun-Times* the ineffable Irv Kupcinet, major domo of Fritzel's and the Pump Room, a sweet guy and a cracking good columnist. The *Sun-Times* itself is a highly readable piece of pulp that has managed to stay in the morning ring with the heavyweight champ, the *Tribune*, in

spite of a terrific financial beating. If the *Sun-Times* can hang on, it may become a very good newspaper.

It will probably come as a surprise to many people to learn that Joe Medill didn't found the *Tribune*. That honor goes to Joseph C. K. Forrest, a Swedenborgian clergyman, and his associates, James J. Kelley and John E. Wheeler. The first edition of the paper was turned out on a hand press by its owners on June 10, 1847. It numbered 400 copies, and the place of publication was a three-story building on the corner of Lake and LaSalle. The Rev. Mr. Forrest was sure that the paper would be carried along "by the stream of Providence," and he optimistically bought the *Gem of the Prairie* and made it the weekly edition of the *Tribune*. Providence, however, was not notably cooperative until 1853, when Joseph Medill hied into town from Cleveland and purchased a share in the *Tribune*.

The combination of Joseph Medill and the Civil War made the *Tribune*. Medill had his faults, but he was a great newspaperman—opinionated, driving, relentless, and smart. Taking over as editor, he scored the first of innumerable *Tribune* scoops in 1858 when he published the Lincoln-Douglas debates. He was in on the founding of the Republican party, and is generally credited with naming it. He and the *Tribune* were the first to see presidential timber in Abraham Lincoln, and historians agree that without the *Tribune* Lincoln would never have been nominated for the presidency in 1860, let alone elected. All during the Civil War the *Tribune*, as the leading organ of the Radical Republicans, punched with both hands, even directing a couple of haymakers at its man Lincoln when he seemed to be too lenient towards the South. Cyrus McCormick, the reaperman, had bought the Chicago *Times* in 1859 and had turned it into the leading anti-war paper in the North; during the war itself the *Times* was a strident exponent of "Copperheadism" and Medill and McCormick fought each other with no holds barred. Little did either dream that their

blood-lines would later be joined through the marriage of Medill's daughter to McCormick's nephew, and that the issue of this marriage would be Colonel Robert R. McCormick, present publisher of the *Tribune*.

The war made the *Tribune*. It had picked the winner, Lincoln and the North. It had backed the Radicals. It was the Bible of Union veterans all over the country, the voice of the growing Midwest, the fountainhead of expansionist Americanism. Joe Medill was riding the crest.

At this point, the crest broke and deposited Joe high and dry on the beach. The other owners of the paper had a little disagreement with him, with the result that Horace White took over as editor. White was a liberal Republican, and for a nine-year period between 1865 and 1874 the *Tribune* was a "progressive" paper. With Murat Halstead and Whitelaw Reid, White supported the Liberal Republicans against the Radical Republicans (actually conservatives) and the paper backed Horace Greeley for president in 1872—something that made Medill grind his teeth in rage. When Greeley lost, White's star descended, and in 1874 Medill was able to purchase control of the paper. He took over as publisher, installed his brother Samuel J. Medill as Managing Editor and Frederick C. Hall as City Editor, and restored the *Tribune* to the regular Republican ranks. From then on until his death in 1899, the *Tribune* faithfully reflected the views and personality of Joseph Medill. It still does, for Robert R. McCormick is the reincarnation of his grandfather.

From the beginning the *Tribune* was a controversial paper. Like Medill, it didn't pussyfoot. It hit as hard when it was wrong as it did when it was right. It was personal journalism carried to the *n*th degree; everything that was wrong with Joe Medill was wrong with the paper, and everything that was right with him was right with the paper. After Medill departed, the same thing was to be true of Medill's grandsons, Joe Patterson and Robert McCormick. The paper was a faithful reflection of

their personalities (although this was truer of McCormick than of Patterson). It was sometimes wrong, but never dull. It feared neither man nor God. Its enmity was to be avoided because it had a long memory. Its friendship was to be prized, because it stuck by its friends and rewarded them generously. It was always a good place to work, a newspaperman's newspaper that paid top wages and took care of its employees, and the Medills, Pattersons, McCormicks and their trusted subordinates were careful to assemble the best talent that money could buy. Today the *Tribune* is as controversial as ever, and as opinionated as ever, and still a good shop where newspapermen like to work. The Colonel, whatever his alleged lacks as a military strategist (and some experts believe he is a very good strategist), is a sound newspaperman and a good employer.

With so many people down through the years—"Copperheads," liberal Republicans, Democrats, labor unionists, internationalists, New Dealers, Prohibitionists, One-Worlders, socialists, and all inhabitants of the Eastern seaboard—cordially hating the *Tribune*, it must have had *something* to stay in business. No paper in America has roused as much animosity against itself, in high places and low, as the *Tribune*. It feuded, with no holds barred, with Cyrus H. McCormick (whose *Times* the *Tribune* called "The Wells St. blow-pipe"), with Horace Greeley, with Henry Ford, with Carter Harrison I (who hurled the paper to the floor of the Auditorium, stamping and spitting on it), with Mayor William Hale Thompson, with Governor Len Small, with Franklin D. Roosevelt, with Marshall Field III ("middle-aged playboy"), with Harry Truman. An election-night crowd burned stacks of *Tribunes*—complete with eight-column heads proclaiming the election of Thomas E. Dewey to the presidency—in the streets of the Loop in 1948.

Yet, people continue to buy and read the *Tribune*, and today its daily circulation of just under a million copies is the largest of any standard-sized newspaper in the country. Why?

Simple. It's the editorial page that generates controversy; get beyond it and you've got an excellent newspaper. The Medills, McCormicks, and Pattersons have been shrewd enough to realize that if they were going to get any large number of people to stand still for their editorializing, they would have to put out a sound, mass-appeal paper in other respects. This they have done. While ruling the editorial page with a firm hand, the publisher has given top-notch newspapermen like Jim Keeley, E. S. Beck, Walter Howey, and J. Loy Maloney the money, the staff, and the freedom to make the rest of the paper first-rate in every respect.

Not only that, but the Medill-Patterson-McCormick family itself has contributed a lot of excellent journalistic brains to the enterprise. Joe Medill set the tone of the paper as a colorful, hard-hitting organ of the Right. Captain Joe Patterson, Colonel McCormick's cousin (one Medill daughter married a McCormick, the other a Patterson) was smart enough to anticipate the popularity of funny papers, and he brought to the *Tribune* such circulation-builders as Andy Gump, Moon Mullins, and Little Orphan Annie—"the Westbrook Pegler of the Comic Strips." Today the *Tribune's* comics are generally regarded as the best in the country. Colonel Robert R. McCormick made the paper financially sound and introduced a number of technical improvements. He bought thousands of acres of Canadian forest land so that the paper would have its own pulp supply; he improved the printing process and was the first to prove the feasibility of color advertising, and he was a pioneer in the field of wire transmission of newspictures.

One of the most notable personal accomplishments of the many-sided *Tribune* publisher is the creation of that unique and far-reaching system of newsprint supply known as "Trees to Tribunes." It was in 1915 that McCormick, forced to compete with the cut-rate paper supply of the Hearst empire, sent the veteran Canadian explorer William Carter on an expedition to uncover new spruce and balsam forests located on waterways.

Carter found what he was looking for at the mouth of the Rocky River in the Province of Quebec, and the Tribune made a deal with the provincial government by which it acquired control of 300 square miles containing 192,000 acres of trees. Later deals brought the holdings up to 2,700,000 acres, some on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, some in Ontario, and some on Heron Bay at the north end of Lake Superior. Two whole towns were created out of the wilderness, Shelter Bay and Baie Comeau. Power plants were built, paper mills erected, and a fleet of ships brought into being. Periodic trips are made to this northern Tribuneland by Colonel McCormick, all *Tribune* executives, and, on gala occasions, the WGN Symphony Orchestra.

The present *Tribune* publisher is by all odds one of the most interesting men in town and, for that matter, in the town's history. He is damned and praised, hated and loved. Nobody is neutral towards Colonel McCormick, and there are very few people towards whom the Colonel is neutral. He is, in a sense, a surviving and in some ways magnificent relic of a bygone era. The tales about him are legion and many are apocryphal; whole books have been written pro and con McCormick. There is great personal loyalty to him on the executive level at the *Tribune*, and his solicitousness for the welfare of his employees from scrubwomen to managing editor has engendered considerable affection for him throughout the shop.

There is a widespread impression that while McCormick can dish it out, he can't take it. This is erroneous—actually the Colonel takes personal criticism very well; it is criticism of the *Tribune* that riles him. Moreover the Colonel learned to "take it" the hard way—in the seamy atmosphere of Chicago ward politics. It is generally forgotten now that he was once elected alderman in the 21st ward, and in the course of a hot campaign rang doorbells and set up drinks in tough saloons. Later he ran for the presidency of the Sanitary District and was elected to a job that forced him, for five years, to don hip boots and roam

various nauseous construction projects at all hours of the day and night. It was during his tenure as president of the Sanitary District that he met a young Irish engineer named Edward J. Kelly and upped Kelly's pay from $300 to $500 a month when the latter had guts enough to knock down a recalcitrant employee who was a friend of Republican boss Fred Busse. This early association goes far to explain why the *Tribune*, while pounding away at the New Deal, was generally friendly to the New Deal's major domo in Chicago, Democratic boss Edward J. Kelly.

Outside of the Medills, Pattersons, and McCormicks the man who did most to make the *Tribune* what it is today was a product of the London slums by the name of James Keeley. Keeley arrived at the *Tribune* via Kansas Ciy, and in 1895, at the age of 28, he became the *Tribune's* city editor. From then until he went to Herman Kohlsaat's ill-fated *Record-Herald* in 1914, Keeley ran the paper. A lot of people didn't like him and Burton Rascoe, the *Tribune's* dramatic critic and bookman, detested him. "A tin-pot Mussolini," Burt called him in later days.

The hand of Keeley is still perceptible today in much of what is good in the *Tribune*. At his urging, *Tribune* sportswriter Hughey Keough ("By Hek") started "The Wake of the News," the oldest sports column in the country, in 1905. Later Keeley lured Ring Lardner away from Hearst to conduct "The Wake"; other Wake-sters have been Harvey T. Woodruff and the present sports-editor of the paper, Arch Ward. Walter Eckersall, the former University of Chicago football star, was brought into the *Tribune's* sports department in 1907 and was its chief adornment until 1930. Such sports-writing luminaries as Si Sanborn, Charley Dryden, Hugh Fullerton, and Jim Crusinberry helped make the paper's sports page one of the best in journalism. In 1933 Arch Ward initiated the All-Star Baseball game, another *Tribune* "first."

It was Keeley who instituted the *Tribune's* "personal ser-

vice" features. For years the paper had campaigned against patent medicines and nostrums, and Keeley got Dr. William A. Evans, former city health commissioner, to do a column called "How to Keep Well." It was and is one of the paper's most popular features. Keeley also brought in, in 1901, the man who was to become one of the most beloved columnists in the history of American newspaperdom — Bert Leston Taylor. "BLT," as he was affectionately known, conducted his "Line O'Type Or Two" on the paper's editorial page until his untimely death in 1921. "The Line," as the column is known around Chicago, was often the first to print the poems and literary odds and ends of writers who were later to make names for themselves.

Bert Taylor himself was an eccentric character, a veteran newspaperman who, like Eugene Field, was publicly sweet and privately somewhat sour. A professional humorist, Bert seldom smiled and, like most professional humorists, his conversation was likely to be liberally sprinkled with plaint and invidious comparison. He never quite got over a *faux pas* which he made at the very height of his career because of his inability to read Latin. Like most writers and particularly like most columnists, he was not above quoting from poems, essays, etc. in another language than English, fondly believing (even as you and I) that that made him appear a man of vast erudition. One day he received three very impressive-looking quatrains in Latin which, as sketchily interpreted by an office boy who had taken high-school Latin, seemed harmless enough. Bert had them set in ten-point Caslon Old Style type, and they led off his column the next day. Immediately all hades broke loose; thousands of protesting letters, phone calls, and telegrams poured in. It seems that the first letter of each line of the quatrains formed an acrostic which constituted an obscene command. That edition of the paper is now a collector's item. Poor Bert, ordinarily an abstemious man, ran out of the office and went on a long binge.

Thereafter, he never read a poem in any language without examining it minutely for possible cryptograms.

In 1903 Jim Keeley made what was perhaps his best gambit for the *Tribune*. He lured the up-and-coming cartoonist, John T. McCutcheon, away from Victor Lawson's *Record-Herald* by offering him the then-munificent salary of $250 a week. From then on the affable McCutcheon (an Indiana cut-up who once went to a Futurist party dressed, or undressed, to represent a Matisse nude) was a daily *Tribune* feature, and in later years his aseptic drawings were to perfectly mirror the thinking of his employers.

Under Keeley, the *Tribune* scooped its competitors to a fare-thee-well. It beat the press of the nation on Dewey's destruction of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in one of the most outstanding news beats in newspaper history. Its John Callan O'Laughlin did it again in 1905, getting a highly-secret U. S. Navy report on the destruction of the Russian fleet under Admiral Rozhestvenski at Tsushima Straits to the paper hours in advance of the competition. In 1906 Keeley personally trailed the absconding banker Paul O. Stensland to Morocco and got him to come back to Chicago and give himself up. In 1912, Keeley exposed the corruption of William O. Lorimer and got Lorimer expelled from the Senate; he was also instrumental in the impeachment and removal from office of Judge Robert W. Archbald. Long after Keeley had departed from the paper the zealous journalism which he had inculcated in the staff persisted and the scoops continued to roll in.

Its foreign service has never been the strong point of the paper—as, for instance, it has been the strong point of the *Daily News*—but the *Tribune* has had some good people at its foreign desks, some of them, surprisingly enough, being quite "left of center." Frederick Smith, Frazier Hunt, William L. Shirer, George Seldes, Edmund Taylor, Sigrid Schultz, and Floyd Gibbons have all labored in foreign fields for the *Tribune*. Smith

was the first American newspaperman in Berlin after the Armistice in 1918, and Gibbons scooped the world on the Russian famine. Previously, Gibbons had scooped the rest of the U. S. press with an exclusive interview with Pancho Villa. John Steele, the *Tribune* man in London, had brought the Sinn Feiners and the British government together in 1921. In 1929, the *Tribune* "obtained" (journalese for "stole") the secret plans for a new German pocket battleship, "Armored Cruiser A" (later the *Graf Spee*), and rushed them to the Navy Department. The paper scooped the U. S. press on the Bataan death-march and the Doolittle raid on Tokyo. In 1946, it contributed evidence that helped convict William G. Heirens of the butcher-murder of little six-year-old Suzanne Degnan.

Floyd Gibbons' scoop of the world press on the Russian famine is particularly interesting. In the period immediately after World War I Soviet censorship had clamped a tight lid on news from the famine areas. No correspondents were allowed to go into the stricken sections, and the news out of Moscow was a mere trickle of rumor and propaganda. The flamboyant Floyd, whose reputation as a journalistic dare-devil was already firmly established, went to Maxim Litvinov and announced that unless he was permitted to go to the famine area he would make a parachute jump into Red Square to protest Soviet censorship. Litvinov, knowing that Floyd was entirely capable of such a manoeuvre, finally gave grudging consent for Floyd and three fellow-correspondents to make a trip to the famine-afflicted Ukraine. After a brief inspection had revealed the full horror of the tragedy, all four correspondents made arrangements to return to Moscow, where they would file their dispatches with the Russian censor. Floyd, however, sneaked into the telegraph office of a little Ukrainian town and induced the emaciated operator to send his copy directly to Paris and from thence to Chicago. The *Tribune* was on the streets with Floyd's dispatch days ahead of the opposition.

When Keeley left the *Tribune* in 1914, McCormick began to expand the "personal service" features that Keeley had initiated. A "law department" was instituted, many features of interest to women created, a "Voice of the People" brought into being. A *Tribune* experimental farm was set up. Giant outdoor shows like the Chicagoland Music Festival, the Golden Gloves bouts, the All-Star Football Game, and the Silver Skates Derby were put on. Most of the sports events were charity affairs, and the paper has poured millions of dollars into various charities in this way down through the years.

The *Tribune* has been the *bête noire* of two war administrations, Woodrow Wilson's in 1917-1918 and Franklin D. Roosevelt's in 1941-1945. Joe Patterson was managing editor of the paper at the beginning of World War I, and his reading of Von Clausewitz and Friedrich von Bernhardi ("the moral justification of war") had caused him to believe in the probability of a German victory. Moreover, the *Tribune* reporting of the German side of the war up to the time that the United States entered it was considerably better than its reporting of the Allied side, a happenstance which caused Keith Preston to observe in his *Daily News* column that James O'Donnell Bennett, the *Tribune* correspondent with the Kaiser's armies, had "visited the Great Headquarters and has been kissing the Great Hindquarters ever since." Once the U. S. entered the war, however, both Patterson and McCormick hastened into uniform. Patterson refused a commission at first, but came out of the war a captain, while McCormick emerged as a colonel, serving with distinction at the Battle of Cantigny and winning the DSM. During World War II both the *Tribune* and the New York *Daily News* blamed the war on the Roosevelt administration, but supported the national war effort. After it was over, both papers lit into the administration mercilessly and kept up the attack on Harry Truman and the Fair Deal.

A great deal of the *Tribune's* controversy with Washington

has centered around Col. McCormick's concept of the freedom of the press, and his devotion to that principle. Foes of the *Tribune* allege that the Colonel's idea of a free press is an unorthodox one which is concerned only with freedom for publishers, but, whatever it is, the Colonel has fought for it manfully. Even such a hostile critic as John Tebbel, in his study of the McCormick-Patterson empire called *An American Dynasty* grudgingly admits that: "the briefs prepared by its (the *Tribune's*) able lawyers, while they have been fashioned naturally to further the interests of the client, have also contributed in a large measure to the legal framework upon which our present press freedom rests."[1] Altogether the *Tribune* has spent some $3,000,000 on court fights involving freedom of the press. Colonel McCormick was the first chairman of the ANPA's general committee on freedom of the press and has written hundreds of thousands of words on the subject.

In 1917 Robert Peattie retired as literary editor of the *Tribune*, and the book desk was turned over to a brash young man who had come up from the University of Chicago to do reporting and editorial odd-jobs for the paper, Burton Rascoe. Between 1917 and 1921, when he was fired for making a funny remark about Christian Science in one of his reviews, Rascoe made the *Tribune* book section the best in the country outside of New York.

Even before taking over the literary page, Rascoe had been a journalistic gadfly with a writing acquaintance with authors and critics all over the world. He was a warm friend and admirer of Henry Mencken, and when he became literary editor of the *Tribune*, the Sage of Baltimore wrote him:

I congratulate the *Tribune* and God upon your ordination, but not you yourself. You will sweat for authors, and they will drop

1. John Tebbel, *An American Dynasty* (New York: Doubleday, 1947), p. 324.

purgatives in your coffee. You will do filthy favors for publishers, and they will curse you in the miserable taverns where they meet. But remember this: there is a lot of fun in the job.

(As quoted by Burton Rascoe in *Before I Forget,* p. 354)

It was Burt Rascoe, as much as anyone else, who was responsible for making Chicago "the literary capital of the universe" during the Golden Age of Chicago letters. Before leaving for New York and the *Tribune* there, he jousted valiantly for all forms of culture in Porkopolis, breaking a lance for James Branch Cabell and *Jurgen* long before the pundits elsewhere had fastened on the shy Virginian as a major talent. And the *Tribune* book section today is a fitting memorial to Burt Rascoe's four years as literary editor. Edited by Frederic Babcock and with such veteran bookmen (and women) as Delos Avery, Harry Hansen, Vincent Starrett, and Fanny Butcher doing weekly columns, the Sunday *Tribune's* "Magazine of Books" is a surprisingly urbane and sophisticated literary organ.

The *Tribune* today? It is still almost pure Medill or, if you prefer, pure McCormick. Executive editor J. Loy Maloney, a 100% McCormick loyalist, is an expert at transmuting the famous RRMc notes into repertorial assignments, cartoons, and editorials. And the Trib is still a first-class newspaper shop with excellent features, top sports and comics, a good local column ("A Line O'Type Or Two," now conducted by John T. McCutcheon, Jr.) and more advertising lineage than anyone would care to count.

* * *

Draw a line from 15 North Wells Street across to 32, and you have the axis around which revolved another vigorous and fertile newspaper—the old Chicago *Daily News.* From the creaking door at 15 across to the dingy old German hofbrau

called Schlogl's there filed, for some fifty years, one of the greatest arrays of journalistic talent ever gathered under one masthead. It was in Schlogl's that Ben Hecht and Henry B. Sell entertained at lunch for the eminent English author, Mr. Hugh Walpole, having previously sawed through the legs of the chair upon which Mr. Walpole was to sit. "We were afraid stitches would have to be taken," was Ben's succinct comment on the outcome of this affair.

Today, comfortably ensconced in a beautiful skyscraper built over the tracks leading to the Northwestern and Union Stations, the Chicago *Daily News* is the fourth largest afternoon paper in the land, with a daily circulation in excess of 571,000. But when the old newspapermen talk about The News they mean the paper of fifty or twenty-five years ago, when Chicago newspaperdom was a Daily Donnybrook and casualty lists might well have been published along with circulation figures.

The *News* came into being because a young Methodist minister's son, Melville Elijah Stone by name, was irritated at the conservatism of the paper that was then employing him. It was the Chicago *Inter-ocean*. The *Inter-ocean's* motto was: "Republican in everything, independent in nothing." Stone thought Chicago was ripe for an independent paper, so he quit the *Inter-ocean* and, with a reporter by the name of William E. Dougherty, started the *Daily News* as a 1¢ afternoon paper in 1875. He thereupon jumped boldly into the middle of a journalistic affray with such doughty antagonists as Joseph Medill of the *Tribune*, Wm. Penn Nixon of the *Inter-ocean*, and Wilbur F. "Old" Storey of the *Telegraph*. Medill and Nixon were tough enough, but in taking on Storey the brash Stone was opposing not only the forces of this world but of the next, for Storey at this time was being guided in all his decisions by the "Little Squaw," the ghostly "control" of his favorite medium. A total of six papers, three morning and three afternoon, vied

with the new *Daily News* for the allegiance of 400,000 Chicagoans.

The going was tough in the early months. From the first the paper sold about 4000 copies a day, and the penny price was from two to four cents under the competition. But in those days, there were almost no pennies in circulation in Chicago. The resourceful Stone tried to get around this by inducing local merchants to sell their goods for odd prices like 99¢ and 49¢, thus leaving the customers with a penny change and nothing to buy with it except the *News*. He also brought in a large supply of pennies from the Mint and ran ads in the paper offering to make change for anybody in the City at the *News* office. These stratagems were only moderately successful, however, and it was with considerable relief that Stone and Dougherty made the acquaintance of a young English remittance man by the name of Percy Meggy, who had $5,000. Meggy was induced to become a partner in the *News* and he undoubtedly saved it from an early grave. He was allergic to labor himself, but he greatly enjoyed hanging around the *News* office and watching Stone and Dougherty sweat. Finally, he got tired of this sport and moved on to Australia, precipitating another financial crisis.

It was about this time that Custer and his troop were massacred by the Sioux on the Little Big Horn, and Stone shocked Chicago by announcing editorially that "the killing of Custer and his men by Sitting Bull was a perfectly justifiable act on the part of the latter, considering all the circumstances." It seemed as though this insult to the *Beau Sabreur* of the U. S. Cavalry would surely end the brief career of Melville Stone and that the *News*, like Custer, was about to die with its boots on. Dougherty, thinking he read the handwriting on the wall, sold his share in the paper to Stone for $55.

Bernard F. Sunny, the old press telegrapher, gives us some

insight into the News' financial difficulties in a letter to Editor Charles Dennis:

In 1876 I was night manager of the A and P Telegraph Co., which carried press matter in competition with Western Union. Copy used to begin to come in from the East at about 8 or 8:30 every night and continued to come in until about midnight. It was customary for the *Daily News* repeatedly to send its messenger for copy. My recollection is that on a certain night each week when I came on duty at 6 o'clock I would find a stereotyped written order by the day manager to the effect that press copy was to be delivered to the *Daily News* only on payment of $50. When the messenger arrived from the *Daily News* on that particular night he was instructed to tell his office to send the money. That usually resulted in the appearance of an older person who expressed surprise that the news service was being held up and said that, since the business office was closed, the payment would be made in the morning. We still declined to furnish the copy. That invariably brought a sharp note from the editor, protesting against the outrage. Then, generally about 10:30 or 11, there would come a part payment in cash, but not enough. Subsequently payment would be enlarged by the addition of postage stamps, small coins, etc. until the total approximated the bill, whereupon the copy would be released.

From such small vexations the paper was saved when, on August 1, 1876, Victor F. Lawson assumed its liabilities and took over as publisher. Lawson was the owner of the building in which the *News* was published, the editor and publisher of a small foreign-language paper called "*The Daily Scandinaven*" which occupied the ground floor. He and Stone had been high school classmates, and it was because of his friendship with young Lawson that Stone had obtained space in the *Daily Scandinaven* building. Under the new agreement, Stone worked for Lawson for $25 a week and one-third of the profits. By the time Stone left the paper in 1888 this one-third was worth several hundred thousand dollars.

Victor Lawson assumed responsibility for the business end of the paper and promptly put it on a paying basis. A deeply religious man, he ruled out liquor advertising and pointed out to Stone that the "personals" column had become a sort of recruiting ground for prostitutes—a house of ill fame in South Bend had openly advertised for two girls in it—and the column was eliminated. When the telephone came along, Lawson was the first publisher to see its possibilities; he deputized druggists in every neighborhood in the city to accept *Daily News* ads over their phones and thus built up the advertising business in the *News* to the place where old Platt Lewis, diminutive and weather-beaten autocrat of the composing room, one day threw the advertising copy on the floor, stamped on it, and shrieked profanely through tobacco-stained teeth: "X&%—&! It won't be long before we'll only have room to print 'A great many things happened in Chicago today!' "

Under the Lawson aegis the *News* was "first" in many things. It was the first paper to run full-page ads, Lawson extracting the first one from Henry B. Selfridge for Marshall Fields. It was the first to try the new Mergenthaler linotype machines. It printed the first daily column in the country, Eugene Field's "Sharps and Flats." It was the first paper to print daily installments of a continued story, and first to conduct a "postcard poll" (1896). It was the first paper to print its daily circulation figures. Lawson, quick to accept new methods, installed one of the first home telephones in the Chicago area in his residence in Lake View—and the first message he received over it was from the *News* office, informing him that the boiler had blown, taking several thousand dollars worth of valuable equipment with it!

Lawson, although personally a rather distant man, had a yen for social service which he expressed through the paper. At that time newsboys were the primary agents of distribution for all newspapers; these urchins, many of them homeless, often

slept in doorways and alleys and, when not selling papers, got into all sorts of scrapes. Lawson built a large "Newsboys Hall" overlooking Calhoun Place ("Newsboys Alley") in back of the *Daily News* building; it contained a stage, a gymnasium, and a restaurant, and boys who had no other home were welcome to sleep there. In the restaurant the *News* sold two red-hots on a bun for 1¢, a pork chop for 2¢, pie for 1¢, soda pop for 2¢, and a full meal for 5¢. Little wonder that with such attractions the *News* corralled the best newsboys in the city. Among the worthies who got their start in life selling papers for the *News* were "Hinky Dink" Kenna, later to become the all-powerful boss of Chicago's First Ward, and James C. Petrillo, today the all-powerful boss of the Musicians Union. Lawson also established the "Daily News Sanitarium for Sick Babies" on Simmons Island in Lincoln Park. At the time, such activity by a newspaper was unprecedented.

Meanwhile, the ebullient Stone, freed from the tedium of business details, was running competition into the ground. He had formerly worked for the MacMullen brothers on *The Post and Mail* and they now paid him the compliment of stealing most of their news from the *Daily News*. Stone's first edition came out at noon; the MacMullens would pirate it shamelessly for their later editions, usually not bothering to change a single word. This infuriated Stone—and so, one day after the *Post and Mail* had lifted a lively description of the activities of the South Carolina legislature from the *News* noon edition, he laid a trap for his erstwhile employers. The following day the noon edition of the *News* carried what purported to be a cable dispatch from London to the effect that the *Times* of that city had received word from its Belgrade correspondent that starvation was rife among the Serbs. The dispatch quoted, in the original Serbian, an ominous proclamation by the mayor of Belgrade: "Er us siht la Etsll iws nel lum cmeht," which the *News* gravely translated as "The municipality cannot aid."

Stone sat back and waited. Sure enough, the three o'clock edition of the *Post and Mail* featured the alleged dispatch from Belgrade, cryptic message in Serbian and all. Stone howled with glee, and let the other Chicago papers in on the hoax. The *Post and Mail* caught on and eliminated the dispatch from its five o'clock edition, but the damage had been done and the *Post and Mail* was the laughing stock of Chicago. For the message in Serbian was simply "The MacMullens will steal this sure," spelled backwards. That finished the *Post and Mail.*

It was one of the ironies of fate that Stone and Lawson, God-fearing and abstemious men both, should have assembled one of the most bibulous staffs ever to grace the offices of an American newspaper. Stone in his autobiography says apologetically that: "It was a day when every competent journalist was expected to be a drunkard, and my staff lived up to such requirements." There moved through the city room a hilarious procession of battered derelicts and newspaper bums who had elbowed themselves out of jobs in New York, Detroit, and St. Louis. They found shelter in Chicago, where Stone insisted that they stagger their drinking so that there were always enough of them sober at one time to get out the paper, but did not otherwise interfere with their wassailing. One of Stone's alcoholic editors, "Colonel" Nate Reed—a stately, bewhiskered gentleman who always wore a high silk hat—graduated to greater journalistic glory when, after a long stay at the Keeley Institute, he became editor of the *Banner of Gold,* the official publication of the alumni of that famous spa.

The most renowned of the old *News* tipplers was Ross Raymond, alias Frank Powers, of Poland, Ohio. Under his real name of Powers he had been drummed out of the U. S. Naval Academy for drinking and other peccadillos and had gone into journalism. He had great personal presence, an ingratiating manner, soulful eyes, a sharp awareness of the infinite gullibility of man, and a sense of news values that insured him a

newspaper job whenever he wanted one, which he often did between bouts with John Barleycorn and terms in jail.

When Powers was in his cups he was assailed by an irrepressible desire to swindle somebody. At the Naval Academy he had acquired enough sea lore to enable him to pose successfully as an admiral, which he did on many occasions. He also posed at various times as a general, a diplomat, a wealthy sportsman, etc. At such times he almost invariably appeared as a grave, sad figure with a heroic past whose sensitive soul was bruised by the inhumanity of man to man. Once he had worked his way into the sympathies of his hearers, the outcome was always the same. Would they cash a small check to tide him over the week-end? Lend him a few pounds, or dollars, or francs until he could get in touch with his solicitor? Invariably they would. Whereupon, exit Mr. Powers-Raymond. The best newspaper assignment he ever had—indeed, one so congenial that he must have suggested it to Stone himself—was when he was sent to Saratoga Springs to do nothing for two weeks but mingle with the rich in the hotels there and report their conversations for the edification of Chicago packing-house workers.

Powers' most celebrated exploit was performed at the expense of the Hotel Bristol in Paris. One day a dark, distinguished-looking gentleman in red fez and impeccable morning dress asked to see the manager. He told that worthy that he was a court-officer of the Khedive of Egypt; that the Khedive was coming to Paris and would like to reserve a floor of the hotel. Moreover, there was to be a banquet for 800 guests, a special fashion show, etc., etc. The manager was overwhelmed at the honor; he hired extra help, and for days the court-officer and the manager were closeted together making plans for the great occasion. The "Egyptian" was on the most intimate terms with the manager and the hotel staff, so little was thought of it when he suggested that since the Khedive was to make extensive purchases of jewelry while in Paris, it

might be well to have the jewelers send over a collection of their best rings, necklaces, etc. to be ready for the Khedive's inspection. No sooner said than done, and the jewels were placed in the keeping of the court-officer until His Highness should arrive. The Khedive never did arrive and the jewels—and the "court-officer"—departed for parts unknown. Powers escaped to the U. S. after this *coup* and for some reason was never indicted for it. What happened to the jewels is also a mystery, for Powers was shortly broke again, and getting small and worthless checks cashed by "friends" at Saratoga, Newport, Hot Springs, and other fashionable resorts.

During all this, Powers was sending dispatches to the *News* under the name of Raymond and was doing a bang-up job as a newspaperman. Later he worked for papers in Philadelphia and St. Louis, and was always able through sheer ability to rise from reporter to the higher journalistic echelons—whereupon his weakness invariably caught up with him; he would have a drink or two, swindle somebody, and end up in jail. Stone thought that Powers was sick and tried to get him to commit himself to a mental institution, but to no avail.

As the *News grew*, Stone had to weed out the inebriates. The paper's circulation had received a shot in the arm as a result of the great railroad strike of 1877, Stone scooping the other Chicago sheets to a fare-thee-well by mounting his reporters on horseback and having them gallop madly back and forth between the *News* office and the scenes of disorder in the outlying districts of the West and South Sides. Moreover, the *News* sided with the strikers editorially and as a result, Stone was visited by a delegation of outraged businessmen headed by Levi Z. Leiter (of Leiter and Field's) who demanded that he stop inciting the "lawless ruffians" who were on strike. Stone refused; the *News* became known as the workingman's friend, and its circulation bounded from 27,129 a day to 68,823.

It was about this time, too, that William H. Vanderbilt ut-

tered his famous "public be damned" statement in the presence of a *News* reporter, and the paper printed that, thus enhancing its reputation for independence. Vanderbilt was being interviewed in his private car en route to Chicago, and the railroad magnate was expounding on what he would do to improve the Nickel Plate Road, which he was then trying to buy. Among the "improvements" he mentioned was the elimination of several trains. Whereupon the *News* reporter asked him if this might not inconvenience the traveling public, and Vanderbilt replied testily: "Oh, the public be damned." This statement dogged him for the rest of his life.

At this point, Stone wooed Henry Ten Ecyk away from the rival *Tribune* and made him city editor of the *News*. Ten Eyck, who was known as "Butch" because of his capacity for butchering copy, began to build the extraordinary staff which was to make the *News* one of the really great newspapers. He discovered Finley Peter Dunne, and set him to writing about the "Archey Road" Irish of Chicago's Southwest side; he brought in Will Payne, Eugene Wood, Edna Kenton, and Charles D. Stewart. And in his odd moments he enriched literature with a book called *Life with the Trotters*, in which he volunteered the information that the best pick-up for a weary trotting horse between the heats of a race is a quart of champagne diluted with a pint of seltzer.

An outstanding Ten Eyck "find" was the brilliant Amy Leslie. Under the name of Lillie West she had embarked on a stage career, but had quit it after her baby died. She had submitted sketches on theatrical life to the *News*, and since she was living in Chicago, Ten Eyck called her in, hired her as dramatic critic, and assigned her to review De Wolf Hopper's new play, which was scheduled to open in Chicago that very night. The weather turned bad, and since she had herself acted in that very play with De Wolf Hopper, she undertook to review it without going to the theatre. She praised the play highly, com-

mented discerningly on the various performances, and turned in a bang-up review that pleased Ten Eyck immensely—until he discovered that because of a snow storm, De Wolf Hopper and company had been marooned in Denver and would not reach Chicago until a later date. However, he recovered from this foul blow and Amy Leslie was the principal adornment of the *News* theatrical page for forty years.

In 1883 Stone hired a tall, prematurely bald young man away from a Denver paper and brought him to the *News* for a salary of $50 a week—wonderful pay in those days. The young man was Eugene Field, and his column "Sharps and Flats" was the first daily newspaper column in the country. Gene called himself "the Chicago Dante,"

> . . . the bard
> Of pork and lard,

and did not think of himself as the kindly, gentle person whose "Little Boy Blue" and other verses would soon gain him the appellation of "Children's Chaucer." Indeed, Gene professed to dislike children intensely and some of the jokes he played on his own and other people's kids would seem to bear him out. He wrote "The Lyttel Boy" and other sentimental poems of childhood, he said, because he liked to see women cry. And, while this was a pose, there was a streak of sharpness in him that, even when blunted by humor, cut some people deeply. He ruffled Joseph Pulitzer, of the New York *World*, so severely that Pulitzer refused to speak to him, and Eddie Foy, the comedian, threatened to sue Field and the *News* for damaging his professional reputation. Victor Lawson usually backed Field up in these imbroglios, but on this occasion he addressed a mild but pointed memorandum to Gene in which he said:

> I think we had better let Mr. Foy find his natural level without any further attention one way or the other on our part.

Some of the stuff that Field wrote for the private edification of his friends also belied his reputation as the "Children's Chaucer." There was a strong earthy streak in him, and his "The French Crisis" and other bits of bawdry would certainly have disillusioned most of the middle class readers of "Sharps and Flats."

Gene loved a practical joke, and most of his jokes had a barb concealed somewhere. On one occasion when he wanted a raise from Victor Lawson, he donned a convict suit and marched into Lawson's office, announcing that on his present salary he couldn't afford any other clothes. Another time he rounded up a group of a dozen street ragamuffins and paraded them before Lawson as his poor "children" whom he could not afford to feed and clothe properly on his current income from the paper. Lawson, not known for his largesse, got the point on both occasions and increased Gene's stipend slightly.

The "Children's Chaucer" would go to great lengths to carry out a joke. Knowing of Ten Eyck's preoccupation with horses, he once spent the better part of a night in painstakingly outlining a pair of horsehoes in white paint on the sidewalk in front of the *News* building and leading all the way up the stairs to Ten Eyck's office, making it look as though Ten Eyck had been visited by one of his beloved nags.

Everything was grist to Field's mill—political comment (he was a rock-ribbed Republican), dramatic criticism, sports, humor, poetry. He commented acidly on the performance of a well-known thespian: "Mr.—— played the king as if he was afraid somebody would play the ace." On another occasion he wrote: "Col. G. K. Cooper went swimming in the hot water pool at Manitou last Sunday afternoon, and the place was used as a skating rink in the evening."

Field loved to joke. When Charlie Dennis was editor-in-chief he and Field maintained for years an elaborate pretense that they gave each other terrible pains in the back; on sighting

one another they would put hands to hip and begin yelping with anguish. The first five minutes of their many editorial sessions together would be entirely consumed by an elaborate rigamarole consisting of fake spasms of pain, groans, and intimate resumes of medical attention that each had allegedly received since seeing the other. When Field was out of town, he and Dennis would exchange long telegrams describing their symptoms and announcing a marvelous cure that one or the other had just discovered. This went on right up to Field's untimely death, of a stomach ailment, in 1895.

In 1888 Stone sold out to Lawson and went East, but he and Lawson remained fast friends. Lawson then plunged into a struggle against the old United Press (no relation to the present service by that name) and when he and a group around him set up the Associated Press in 1893, Melville Stone was named as its General Manager, a position he held until 1925. Shortly thereafter Lawson pushed the *News* up to the place where its circulation was equal to that of all the other Chicago papers combined.

In 1893 the morning edition of the *News* was rechristened *The Record*, and went under that name until its sale to Herman H. Kohlsaat in 1901, when it was combined with his *Herald*. The *Record*, or *Morning News*, had a staff of such luminaries as Field, George Ade (whom Lawson had hired to do a column called "Stories of the Street and Town"), Ray Stannard Baker, John T. McCutcheon, Edward Price Bell, William Igleheart, James Weber Linn, Malcolm McDowell, Harold L. Ickes, Kenneth Harris, Howbert Billman, and Clyde Newman. Harvey Woodruff was sports editor, and his boxing reporter was John Hertz, who was later to found the Yellow Cab Company. It was quite a staff. Most of it returned to the *News* in 1901 when Kohlsaat bought the paper.

It was the *News*, which set up the "Saints and Sinners" Corner in McClurg's bookstore. In this sanctuary among the rare

volumes there gathered bibliomaniacs from press and clergy; Eugene Field spent a lot of his spare time there, arguing over books with such men of the cloth as Dr. Robert Collier, Rev. Melancthon Woolsey Stryker, Rev. Father Hogan, Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, and Bishop Frank M. Bristol. W. F. Poole, the librarian who founded Poole's Periodical Index, was a member of the group, as were Dr. Henry Ward Beecher, Joe Jefferson, Sol Smith Russell, and Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

The pride and joy of the *News* in more recent days has been its foreign service. Ray Stannard Baker had marched with Coxey's Army from Massillon, Ohio to Washington in 1894, and it was Baker's colorful reporting of this event that moved Lawson to institute the *News* foreign service that today is considered by newspapermen to be the best in the field. When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, a total of twenty correspondents followed the fronts in Cuba and the Philippines for the *News* and the *Record*, and the *News* dispatch boat, "Hercules," was the mascot of the Atlantic fleet. This little craft, plying out of Tampa, enabled the *News* consistently to scoop most of the other American newspapers.

On the most important news of the war, however, the Lawson papers were themselves roundly scooped—on a fluke. John T. McCutcheon was a cartoonist for the *Record* at the time, and he, Ed Harder, a financial writer for the Chicago *Tribune*, and Joe Stickney of the New York *Herald*, were the only newspapermen with Dewey's fleet at Manila Bay. Dewey had been at sea for weeks and the country had not heard from him; interest in his whereabouts was tremendous. After the battle of Manila Bay, the three newsmen raced to Hong Kong to file their dispatches; they flipped a coin to see who should file first, and Ed Harder won. The New York *World* at this time had an agreement with the Chicago *Tribune* whereby it shared Harder, so Harder filed a brief 30-word cable at "urgent" rates to the New York *World*. McCutcheon filed a long dis-

patch at the regular rate, with the result that Harder's cable, riding the "urgent" wire got to New York late on Saturday night—just in time to stop the presses and catch the *World's* Sunday edition. A Chicago *Tribune* man was in the *World* office when the wire from Harder came in, and he shot it off at once to Chicago, where it caught the Sunday edition of the *Tribune* there. The *News* and the *Record* did not publish on Sunday, and so had to suffer the ignominy of seeing Chicago go crazy over the *Tribune's* scoop, even though they had a staff member on the spot. To make matters worse, McCutcheon's cable, sent at the regular rate, did not even get to Chicago until late Monday.

Lawson was committed to the idea of an extensive foreign service, and by the time the Russo-Jap war came along in 1904, he was ready. John Bass, the most experienced of American correspondents, was chief of the special war staff, and he accompanied Kuroki's forces across the Yalu and on to victory at Liaoyang. Richard Henry Little was at Mukden, and Stanley Washburn viewed the siege of Port Arthur with Nogi's army. Taking a leaf from its Spanish-American war experience, the *News* had one of the two dispatch boats on the Yellow Sea, the other one being the property of the London *Times*. The *Daily News* boat, the "Faiwan," operated out of Chefoo and was in charge of Washburn. Both the Russians and the Japs hated the little newspaper boats, and the Japs finally ordered the *Times* vessel off the seas on the grounds that it had a wireless. The "Faiwan" was under fire many times, and on one occasion the Russians torpedoed a small English merchant ship and then apologized to the captain, saying that they had mistaken her for the "Faiwan."

Lawson's policy in connection with his prized foreign service was to train his correspondents in the hurly-burly of Chicago newspaperdom before sending them overseas. Edward Price Bell, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, Junius B.

Wood, Frederick William Wile, John Bass, Lamar Middleton, Oswald Schuette, Raymond Gram Swing, Bassett Digby, Percy Noel, John Gunther, Hal O'Flaherty, Hiram Motherwell, Constantine Brown, Carroll Binder, Negley Farson, A. R. Decker, Wallace Deuel, William H. Stoneman, Frank Smothers, Reginald Sweetland, and Harry Hansen are only a few of the crack correspondents in World Wars I and II to serve their apprenticeship in the "squirrel cage" at 15 N. Wells. And when World War I broke out the *News* had Edward Price Bell in London, Paul Scott Mowrer in Paris, and Raymond Gram Swing in Berlin. No other American newspaper was anywhere nearly as well situated.

In spite of its eminence in other fields it was not until after World War I that the *News* had a book page of any consequence. Henry B. Sell was the paper's first book editor, and he put out such a sprightly page that Henry Mencken announced that the *Daily News* had "the only civilized book section in this Presbyterian satrapy."

Sell was a character in his own right. For several years, in his spare time he completely redecorated his four-room apartment once a month and then wrote articles on new ways to redecorate a four-room apartment. At the *News*, he enlisted the services of the reporters as book reviewers, and it was only exceptional luck that among them were men like Ben Hecht, John V. A. Weaver, and Carl Sandburg. Any book by a writer outside of the United States got the bum's rush from Sell's staff, the members of which wrote most of their reviews at the bar in Schlogl's. This was all right, however, since most of the editing was also done there. Galsworthy, d'Annunzio, and Ibanez were only a few of the distinguished foreigners to feel the lash of Hechtian invective, and sometimes more than their souls were seared, as Hugh Walpole could witness. Indeed, such a ferocious reputation did the *News* reviewers have that Ibanez demanded police protection when he came to Chicago.

The *News* almost lost the advertising of Scribners, Galsworthy's publishers, because of an article Sell printed on the book page about Galsworthy's ears, which were pointed. Sell had gone to New York to interview the English visitor, but he was so fascinated by Galsworthy's pointed ears that he could think of little else. His subsequent article was concerned almost entirely with the ears, and the zoological comparisons were distinctly unflattering. Scribner's bought space in the *News* to denounce "Henry Sell and his green heifers."

When Sell liked a book, he thought nothing of having it reviewed more than once. Frederick O'Brien's *White Shadows in the South Seas*, for instance, was reviewed no less than 26 times in the *News*. Sometimes Sell let authors review their own books. One of his reviewers would keep a book for four months and then send him a note substantially as follows:

Dear Harry:

That was an interesting book about farmers you gave me. Thanks a lot. How are things going?

Yours,
CARL SANDBURG

Sell didn't care; he would run Sandburg's notes as reviews on the grounds that Carl couldn't write anything uninteresting. He resigned as literary editor in 1920, to be succeeded by Harry Hansen, who in turn was succeeded by Sterling North. Today Sell is editing *Town and Country* from New York for Hearst.

Victor Lawson died in 1925, the same year that Melville Stone retired as general manager of the Associated Press. Walter A. Strong and a group of associates who had been close to Lawson bought the paper, but Strong himself died in 1931 and Colonel Frank Knox took over.

Under Knox, the *News* entered into something of a decline,

at least relative to the other Chicago papers. Two of the mightiest newspaper empires in the world had their headquarters in Chicago—Hearst and McCormick. The competition was a little too stiff for Knox, who was in poor health, and when he died in 1944, the new owner-publisher, John S. Knight, took over a paper which, in spite of its splendid new building and $24,137,000 worth of assets, had slipped to last place circulation-wise in the city.

Today? Well, old newspapermen, hunched down in their easy chairs at the Cliff-Dwellers Club, will tell you that the paper can't hold a candle to the old *News*. In a way they are right, for what paper can be spoken of in the same breath with a daily that, for more than fifty years, graduated into American life and letters a steady procession of its most colorful and able writers, foreign correspondents, and critics? Personal journalism is gone from the *News*, and it is largely a syndicated paper today. Its bylines are no longer signed with names like Eugene Field, Finley Peter Dunne, George Ade, Ben Hecht and Carl Sandburg.

But as a newspaper, today's *News* stacks up pretty well. Its circulation is growing, and its editorial policy is as independent as ever it was in Lawson's day. Its foreign service, with Keyes Beech and Fred Sparks, is still the best in the country. It suffers only by comparison with its own past—but what newspaper doesn't? The newspaper business today is too much of an industry to encourage the kind of personal journalism that made the old *News* what it was.

At the risk of being decapitated, let this writer stick his neck out and express some opinions about the present state of journalism in Chicago.

The *Tribune* is still the *Tribune*. Like it or not, you've got to read it. It's the Midwest's bulletin board and Chicago's own town-crier, and if its editorial page is somewhat hard to swallow, it can be washed down with a sweet sports section which

boasts such luminaries as Arch Ward, Wilfred Smith and Ed Burns, with the "Line O'Type or Two" column conducted now by John T. McCutcheon, Jr., for dessert. As a side order you can have the *Tribune* comics—if comics are your dish.

The *Daily News* is thought of around town as dull but honest. That's a little strong; the paper isn't really dull. It has a foreign service that's tops, and besides, no paper that runs Sydney Harris' "Strictly Personal" column can ever be really dull. Syd is a brilliant iconoclast who is liable to sound off wittily on anything from the intolerance of rare meat eaters to the idiocies of baseball. Oddly enough this isn't just an act; Syd really gets stirred up about these things.

The *Sun-Times*, as previously indicated, hasn't been around long enough to make much of an impression. Sometimes its news coverage is a little sketchy. Its Fair Dealish editorials are well-written, and its campaigns against honky-tonks and hoodlums have given it a deserved reputation for moral courage. Emmett Dedmon, who has just gone from drama and books to the city desk, is a bright young newspaperman and a promising writer. The same goes for Herman Kogan, who has taken over the book and dramatic criticism. In Felix Borowski the paper has the dean of Chicago music critics and an eminent composer. And Irv Kupcinet, the reformed football player, has in "Kup's Column" a local gossip box that compares very favorably with Walter Winchell's and easily outranks all the Chicago competition.

That brings us to the Hearst papers, the afternoon *Chicago American* and the Sunday *Chicago American*. They are full of the usual Hearst boiler-plate——Winchell, Louella Parsons, Westbrook Pegler, Fulton Lewis, Jr., Cholly Knickerbocker (masquerading locally as Cholly Dearborn) and a lot of other King Syndicate features. Some people buy the papers to read the columns, and a number of sporting characters like their handicapping. The local news is handled adequately, and that's

about all you can say for it. Periodically the daily and Sunday editions of the *American* go lolloping out on some great crusade which invariably comes to nothing. They run the usual pictures of bathing beauties, axe-murderesses, and dogs being vivisected. In Warren Brown, they have one of the better sportswriters in town. They look and read like Hearst papers. Some like 'em, some don't.

Newspapermen come and newspapermen go. Today they lunch at Fritzel's or Henrici's or Riccardo's, or at the Cliff-Dwellers, or the Tavern Club. Not many eat at Schlogl's any more.

Schlogl's? Is *that* still there? Oddy enough, it is. Still at the old stand on Wells Street, with all its friends gone and its front camouflaged as a cheap tavern, the old rookery with the Berncastel lithographs still carries on. And today the Koenigsberger chops with anchovy sauce, topped off with a slab of Liederkranz or a peach pancake, washed down with a flagon of Rüdesheimer, is as good a meal as you can get in town at any price.

And all around you as you eat are the ghosts of old Chicago newspapermen who used to say that when they died they'd rather go to Schlogl's than to heaven.

MAN, *isn't everything the blues?*
—WINGY MANONE

Chapter IV

The Jazz Capital

IN THE year 1917, the police of New Orleans made a great unwitting contribution to the cultural life of Chicago. At the request of the United States Navy, they closed down Storyville.

Storyville was a twelve block long area of the old Crescent City that debouched off sinful Rampart Street; since Civil War days it had been the stamping ground of the light ladies and gambling gentry of the town, the most uninhibited area of the most uninhibited city in North America. Ornate houses of ill fame jostled cabarets, seamy dancehalls, and cheap saloons for room and the sidewalks were jammed night and day with people of a variety of colors and purposes. Octaroons, quadroons, Creoles, French and Spanish-speaking whites, Italian-accented banana-checkers from the United Fruit Company docks, and tall Texans mingled in the honky-tonks and listened to the hot but effortless music played by Negroes like King Joe Oliver, Freddie Keppard, Louis Armstrong, Bunk Johnson, Ray Bauduc, Sidney Bechet, Pops Foster, and lots more. These men were real musicians and they played what was known then as rag, or rag-time—an off-beat, improvised rhythm that followed no known musical precept and sounded a good deal like a hopped-up Negro spiritual. They played in the tonks because there was nowhere else for them to play. As

a rule they didn't play in the brothels because their playing was too loud and the madames preferred the softer strains of string ensembles, but without the brothels they would not have been playing at all. The pleasure palaces were the economic base of Storyville; the honky-tonks, saloons, and dance-halls represented merely peripheral interests of the crowds that thronged the quarter.

By 1917 these New Orleans band-men had created a distinct, muted, relaxed and libido-releasing musical form which was later to be known as "jazz" but which they knew only as rag, or "the blues." It was not a conscious art and improvisation was of the essence of it, but in it there were traces of many things: of jungle drums, of tears and laughter, of memories of slavery and the cotton fields, of river noises, and of sex. It had what musicians would call polyrhythm, microtonality, glissandi, and antiphony. It came out of the unconscious mind and the instrument was an extension of the player. The few simple notes of the musical scale were broken up into a variety of quarter-tones which were at once subtle, slurred, quivering, and almost alive. The music told a story of the life out of which it had grown. It was not always or even often a pretty story, but it was brilliantly and movingly alive. In it one could hear the street cars rocking down Tchoupitoulas Street, the Mardi Gras bands, the shouts of joy at the picnics at Milenburg on Lake Pontchartrain, the wail of the lover who comes home to an empty bed. It was all "the blues"—Jelly-Roll Blues, Wang Wang Blues, Milenburg Joy, Tail-Gate Blues, Gut-Bucket Blues, Empty Bed Blues.

It was "the blues," but was it art? That was quite an argument once, but it's passé now. Jazz may irritate a lot of people who associate it (quite rightly) with illegality and libidinous high jinks, but today it is indisputably an art form. It is to music what the revolutionary self-expressionism of a Picasso is to painting. In fact, it has almost passed beyond art and become a

religion, with fanatical modernists and fundamentalists, with purists who claim that only Negroes can play jazz and that nobody has really played any since the days of Buddy Bolden, with a sacred literature (back numbers of *Down-Beat)*, and with "discographers" who search for ancient Gennett and Okeh records of Bix, King Joe, and Satchmo as if they were the relics of a martyred saint.

But that is none of our concern. Let the critics of jazz and its fevered devotees alike go fight John Hays Hammond, Jr. What we are concerned with is the fact that jazz, for better or for worse, came into its own as an art form in Chicago and, in the years between 1918 and 1939, made the town that Ben Hecht called "the jazz baby by the lake" the jazz capital of the universe. It was in that period that the Windy City became "that toddlin' town."

When the gendarmes flushed the quail out of Storyville, the "blues" musicians, parasites on prostitution, had to get out, too. Most of them were black, and the bars of segregation were up everywhere in New Orleans except in the red-light district. When Storyville was shut down there was no place for the ragtime bandmen to play. No place, that is, that would pay them a living for playing. They could still perform at those colorful New Orleans funerals where they accompanied the departed to the graveyard playing "When the Saints Go Marching In" and then swung back to town on a hot-sad blues ("Oh, Didn't He Ramble? He Rambled and He Rambled, But the Butcher Finally Cut Him Down"). And they could play at private parties, and at Mardi Gras. But for breakfast they could kiss their instruments—and you can't buy red beans and rice with a letter of thanks from the Chairman of the Entertainment Committee.

In their extremity, most of the New Orleans music-makers turned to Old Man River. The Strekfus river-boats employed bands to entertain their passengers, and most of the unem-

ployed bandmen were able to catch on. In this way, the new music advanced slowly northward, infecting Memphis and St. Louis with the "blues" virus. When Fate Marable's Show-Boat tied up at Davenport, Iowa, a round-faced kid in knee-pants rushed down to the landing to hear the Show-Boat band give a concert. The kid listened, entranced, while the band's trumpet player blew the sweet, hot, sliding notes. The kid's name was Leon Bismarck "Bix" Beiderbecke, and he was fifteen years old. The trumpet player was only a few years older—Louis Armstrong.

Bix, the living legend; Bix, the personification of jazz. He played cornet and piano, and his technique was all wrong. His fingering was off and he had no lip. It went in all wrong, but it came out so right. He was only the greatest.

Bix belongs to the Chicago jazz story, but not yet.

As a matter of fact, the impecunious New Orleans bandmen had been aiming at Chicago all along. A few of them tarried in Memphis and St. Louis, and a few more cut off at Cairo and went up the Ohio to Louisville, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. But by 1918 most of the expatriate Louisianians, led by King Joe Oliver, had jumped the boats and rushed to reinforce a previously established jazz beachhead on the South Side of Chicago.

Chicago was ready for the refugees from Storyville. It had already tasted the new music; the renowned pianist "Jelly-Roll" Morton (who later claimed that he invented "the blues") had played at the old Pekin Theatre-Cabaret many times in the years between 1905 and 1915; in 1910 and 1911 Jelly-Roll and another great "blues" pianist, Tony Jackson, had played a long engagement at the Elite Cafe at 35th and State. A New Orleans colored outfit called The Original Creole Band had played at the Big Grand Theatre on the South Side in 1913 and then had moved down to the Loop to the North American Restaurant at State and Monroe for a four-months stand. In 1914 the first white ragtime band, "Tom Brown and His Dusters," played

for two weeks at the Lamb's Cafe in the Loop, and it was there at the corner of Clark and Randolph that "Jazz" was named. The Lamb's was having a little union trouble, and some of the striking help tried to hurt business by deprecating the band. Its music, they averred, was nothing but "jass." The word "jass" was a colloquialism of the 22nd Street brothels and was not in general usage outside of Chicago. The slur back-fired, however. The management of the Lamb's shrewdly advertised the principal attraction of the club as "The 'Jass' Band" and the tables were crowded every night. As the word "jass" got around it was cleaned up (slightly) and the new music came to be known as "jazz."

Brown and his "Dusters" didn't stay long, however. They were New Orleans boys and they had come to Chicago without overcoats. When it got cold most of them drifted back down to warmer climes; they played the Lamb's for only two weeks.

In December 1914 the first of the really good jazz outfits arrived in Chicago from New Orleans. Oddly enough, it was a white band, and it was called The Louisiana Five. It had Anton Lada on the drums, Nick LaRocca on cornet, Yellow Nunez on clarinet, Eddie Edwards on trombone and Harry Ragas at the piano. The Louisiana Five was a real solid outfit; it was an instant smash hit at the Casino Gardens and more than any other group it prepared the town for the influx from New Orleans that was to establish Chicago as the jazz capital of the world.

Chicago was an exciting place for the bandmen. Anton Lada, the drummer of the Louisiana Five, remarked of it:

I thought we had dives in New Orleans, but for low-down barrel-house, the Casino had anything in New Orleans beat to shreds. You couldn't move in the joint, it was so crowded. People were lined up outside, too, waiting to hear the "jass" band. Inside they

really went wild, and one of the commonest expressions was "sock it."[1]

The Louisiana Five hadn't been in Chicago long when it experienced internal difficulties and split in two, one segment becoming LaRocca's Original Dixieland Band and the other Lada's Louisiana Five. They were both good outfits, and the split merely spread the jazz gospel more rapidly.

There were a few others who deserve mention in the Period of Preparation, the pre-1918 era. A New Orleans trombonist named George Filhe had come to Chicago in 1913, and in 1916 he formed a New Orleans-type band to cash in on the popularity of the Louisiana Five. This outfit, the name of which has been lost in the shuffle, started out at the Fountain Inn at 63rd and Halsted, and later played at Tommy Thomas' place on the West Side, and at Mike Fritzel's Arsonia. Also in 1916 a New Orleans trumpeter by the name of Manuel Perez brought a five-piece band in to play at the DeLuxe Cafe at 35th and State, and later at the Pekin Theatre-Cabaret and the Arsonia. The famous Sidney Bechet and Lorenzo Tio were members of the Perez band.

Mike Fritzel, incidentally, was one of the first restaurant and cabaret men in the city to see the possibilities of jazz. At the Midnight Frolics, which he managed for Ike Bloom down on the 22nd Street levee, Mike had given some of the first exponents of the "blues" a chance to play; later, at his Arsonia on West Madison Street he featured all the best jazz bands, and finally, at his Friars Inn at Wabash and Adams, he made jazz a big-time attraction. Almost all of the great jazz outfits played the Friars when Mike ran it.

The Golden Age of Chicago jazz really began with the coming of "King" Joe Oliver to Chicago in 1918. "King" was the title bestowed by New Orleans bandmen on the musician who

1. Paul E. Miller, "The Story of the Louisiana Five," *Music and Rhythm*, March, 1941.

played his instrument better, louder and longer than any of his colleagues, and who could prove his right to the title by "cutting" all competitors. You "cut" somebody when you took your instrument to wherever he was playing and then and there demonstrated your own superiority. King Joe had cut the competition to ribbons with his cornet; he had blasted Freddie Keppard and all the rest clear across Rampart Street and his title was undisputed. You had to be a good man to cut Keppard; when he played cornet in vaudeville people couldn't sit in the front seats of the orchestra; they would be blown back to about the fifteenth row. But Joe had cut Freddie good; he had taken his cornet right out into the middle of the street, pointed it straight at the cafe where Keppard was playing, and had bombed away. A big crowd had gathered; Keppard never even came out. He knew he had been cut and was no longer a King.

The news of the King's coming preceded him, and he was met at LaSalle Street Station by representatives of the two best bands then playing the South Side, Jimmy Noone's at the Royal Gardens (later Lincoln Gardens) at 31st and Cottage Grove, and Bill Johnson's at the Dreamland Cafe, 35th and State. Jimmy, Bill, and Sidney Bechet, who was playing for Bill, were in the group that met the King's train. Both Jimmy and Bill wanted Joe; negotiations were entered into immediately, and after adjournment to a bar an amiable arrangement was entered into whereby the King would play in both bands, going from the Royal Gardens to the Dreamland after the former closed for the night.

That was the beginning; the panic was on. Prohibition was a-comin' in, and thirsty whites suddenly discovered that passable booze and superior music were both on tap in the Black Belt. Thirty-fifth Street between State and Calumet began to jump; along it were the dimly-lit, sawdust floored, gin-soaked little joints that were to make jazz history—the Sunset Cafe, the

Plantation, the Dreamland, the Panama, the DeLuxe, the Fiume, the Elite, and New Orleans Babes. Then there were the theatres—the Vendome, the Big Grand, and the Monogram; the dancehalls like Lincoln Gardens, and the record shops. The demand for jazz on the South Side soon outstripped the supply of musicians; New Orleans was depopulated, and white and colored bandmen from all over the country began to drift in. Eddie Condon, the Irish kid from Momence, came to the South Side in 1922 to gawk at the Negro masters and to lap up that "righteous" music. Years later he remarked that in those days the midnight air at 35th and Calumet or 35th and State was so full of music that if you held up an instrument the air would play it.

In 1920 King Joe Oliver put together his own band and moved it into the Dreamland. He called it King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, and it was nothing but the best. The clarinetist was Johnny Dodds, the trombonist Honorè Dutray, the bassist Ed Garland, the drummer Baby Dodds and the pianist Lil Hardin. Two years later, when the Creole Jazz Band was playing the Lincoln Gardens, King Joe sent to New Orleans for a cornetist to play number two horn to his own No. 1. The man he wanted was a callow youth named Louis Armstrong, who had been playing on Fate Marable's Show-Boat. Louis, a refugee from the New Orleans Waifs Home, rushed to Chicago and stood outside the Lincoln Gardens, listening to the band. He felt like running right back to the Show-Boat. "I didn't think I was good enough to play in that band," he said. But he was, and the combination of King Joe and Louis on the cornets and Baby Dodds on the drums really blew the walls out of the Lincoln Gardens.

Eddie Condon, the guitarist, who went down to the Lincoln Gardens with other white kids to learn from the black masters, gives a good picture of a night at the old dancehall in his book, *We Called It Music:*

In the cubicle outside where we paid admission the sound was loud; it came like a muscle flexing regularly four to the bar. As the door opened the trumpets, King and Louis, one or both, soared above everything else. The whole joint was rocking. Tables, chairs, walls, people moved with the rhythm. It was dark, smoky, gin-smelling. People in the balcony leaned over and their drinks spilled on the customers below. There was a false ceiling made of chicken wire covered with phony maple leaves; the real roof was twenty-five feet up. A round, glass bowl hung from the middle of the chicken wire; when the blues were played it turned slowly and a baby spotlight worked over it. There was a floor show and a Master of Ceremonies named King Jones. He would stand in front of Oliver and shout, "Oh! One more chorus, King!" Oliver and Louis would roll on and on, piling up choruses, with the rhythm section building the beat until the whole thing got inside your head and blew your brains out. There was a place near the band reserved for musicians who came to listen and to learn; we sat there, stiff with education, joy, and a licorice-tasting gin purchased from the waiters for $2 a pint. You could bring your own but it didn't matter much; in the end the effect was the same—the band playing Froggie Moore, Chimes Blues, Sweet Baby Doll, Jazzin' Babies Blues, Mabel's Dream, Room Rent Blues, High Society Rag, Where Did You Stay Last Night, Working Man Blues, and everything and everybody moving, sliding, tapping out the rhythm, inhaling the smoke, swallowing the gin.

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The South Side theatres, too, employed jazz bands in the '20's. Erskine Tate and his Vendome Syncopators played at the Vendome for nine straight years, the fifteen-piece band offering a solid two-hour-long concert between showings of the movie. Louis Armstrong, Freddie Keppard, Jubbo Smith, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Fats Waller, Cass Simpson, and Jimmy Bertrand were a few of the musicians who, famous later, were glad to earn a couple of extra bucks with Tate in the Vendome pit. It was here at the Vendome that Louis Armstrong first presented the routine that was to give him his nickname of

"Satchmo"—the Reverend Satchelmouth, preaching to his sinful congregation.

The best of the white bands in town during the early days of the Jazz Era was the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. The Kings, an importation from New Orleans via the Strekfus river-boats, had Paul Mares on trumpet, George Brunies on trombone, and the incomparable Leon Rappolo on clarinet. Their first engagement was in the Cascades Ballroom on the North Side, where the piano was half a tone off; the resulting cacophony was so enchanting that the Rhythm Kings became the most-sought-after jazzmen in town and were able to move down to the Friar's Inn, which they made the No. 1 white jazz spot in Chicago. At the Friar's Leon Rappolo would play chorus after chorus on his clarinet while the customers stopped dancing and crowded up against the bandstand to listen. Mike Fritzel begged Leon to stop and let the dancing continue, but when he was in the groove Leon couldn't hear anything but his own music, and he played on and on. The Rhythm Kings themselves were fascinated by Chicago; after work they would ride all over town on the Elevated just for kicks.

But, great as they were, it was not the New Orleans bandmen who evolved that frenetic method of playing that was to be known in the annals of jazz as "Chicago-style." "Chicago-style" was based on the New Orleans "blues" but it was a radical departure from ragtime. The white and colored New Orleans men played a smooth, effortless jazz—hot but relaxed. The Chicago-style jazzmen pushed up the beat and tore into the music with frenzied intensity; it got louder, hotter, more insistent. The New Orleans men had smiled while they worked and acted as if they were having a good time; the Chicago boys frowned in intense concentration and were exhausted after a half hour of manic virtuosity. Chicago-style jazz was as different from New Orleans style jazz as Chicago is from New Orleans, and in almost exactly the same respects. Yet it was

Chicago-style jazz that was to endure and that was to make jazz a cult, and it is Chicago-style jazz that is worshipped and practiced today in such temples as Nick's and Eddie Condon's in New York and the Blue Note on Chicago's Madison Street.

Who were the Chicago-style bandmen? To begin with, they were a group of white kids who attended Austin High School on the West Side. The Chicago public schools emphasized band music, and in the early 1920's it was the custom for all High School bands to participate in a contest at Riverview Park. At one time at Riverview the jazz historians might have beheld the unique spectacle of Dave Tough playing drums for Austin High, George Wettling for Calumet, and Gene Krupa for Fenger. These were great names in jazz, and they were all home-grown Chicago products. Add to them the names of some other Chicago kids who were growing up around town, plus the names of a few like Eddie Condon, Red McKenzie, and Bix Beiderbecke, who were Midwestern born and found their way to the toddlin' town at an early age, and you have the nucleus of Chicago-style jazz.

Who were they? Well, there was a bespectacled kid attending Lewis Institute by the name of Benny Goodman; he played clarinet. Then there was Gene Krupa, the alderman's son who was studying for the priesthood, playing drums. There was a young truck-driver named Joe Marsala who moved pianos for a living because he couldn't bear to work away from music—he was a clarinetist, too. There was Dave Tough, the skinny Oak Park boy who looked as though he didn't have energy enough to climb up on the bandstand, but who would drive you through the opposite wall when he cut loose on the drums. Ther was a kid pianist playing at the Rainbow Cafe out on the West Side named Art Hodes. There was a little South Side Irisher who blew the cornet like it should be blown, like Papa Joe Oliver and Satchmo blew it—Francis "Muggsy" Spanier.

But the nucleus of this group of dedicated young white boys

was the Austin High gang. There was a West Side drug-store and soda fountain called The Spoon and Straw, and here during recess and after school there gathered a bunch of gawking kids in knee-pants to wear out the records like "Tin Roof Blues" which had been made under the Gennett label by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Among the recess regulars at The Spoon and Straw were Frank Teschemaker, Bud Freeman, Jimmy and Dick McPartland and Jim Lannigan. Jim played piano and was the only one of the Austin High gang to desert jazz for long-hair; he later played a ten-year stretch with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

All of these kids, the Austin High gang and the others, got to know each other by hanging around the South Side joints where King Joe Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Noone, etc. were playing. They came to watch the colored experts and learn from them—Gene Krupa, George Wettling, and Dave Tough hung around the Dreamland and the Lincoln Gardens to observe Baby Dodds on the drums; Benny Goodman couldn't take his eyes off Jimmy Noone on clarinet; Muggsy Spanier was absorbed by King and Louis on the cornets. The white kids, who were years under age (Benny Goodman and Dave Tough joined the Musicians' Union when they were 12 and 13 respectively) and who had no business being out late at night, and particularly no business hanging around speakeasies and dance-halls, waited outside in the street until one of them could catch the eye of King Joe, Jimmy or Satchmo. The colored men would see the kids and nod, and the doorman would let them file in and huddle in back of the bandstand. Sometimes after hours the Great Ones would let the kids sit in, and so they took to lugging their instruments hopefully to the South Side every night. When the lightning struck a tremulous high school boy would be summoned to the stand to see what he could do. "Now, bring in that load of coal, George!" Louis Armstrong would shout to George Wettling, and the blond kid would

pound away at the drums while the Negro musicians grinned and beat out the time with their feet.

Somehow the white kids got through high school, but just how it is hard to say. They did all their sleeping in class.

In 1922 most of the Austin High gang got out of school. Their ages ran from 14 to 17, but what they didn't know about jazz wasn't worth knowing. In that year they put together their first band, and it was one of the best bands anybody ever heard. They called it the Blue Friars; it had Jim Lannigan on piano, Jimmy McPartland cornet, Dick McPartland banjo and guitar, Bud Freeman C-Melody sax, Frank Teschemaker violin and alto sax, Dave Tough drums and Benny Goodman clarinet. Their first job was playing a summer engagement at Lost Lake, and when they came back to town in the fall they had such a reputation that a promoter by the name of Husk O'Hare took them over and renamed them Husk O'Hare's Wolverines. Their principal competition among the white bands was the original Wolverines, an outfit that was formed in 1923 by pianist Dick Voynow. The chief distinction of the original Wolverines was that it had a country character in a four-button suit and a broken-peaked cap playing cornet.

The "corncobber" was Bix. The round-faced kid had come on from Davenport ostensibly to attend Lake Forest Academy, but actually to haunt the South Side "sitting in" with King Joe and Louis, getting high on bootleg gin, and hanging around the newly-organized Blue Friars, trying to get in with them. But the Austin High gang wanted no part of Bix; he had no class, didn't know or care how to dress, wanted nothing to do with women, and seldom changed his underwear. Besides, he had no lip, couldn't finger properly, and knew only one tune. All his brief life he never changed this pattern; his hedonistic activity was limited to music and gin in that order. He never owned a tux, and always had to borrow one when the Wolverines had a high-class engagement; his country-bumpkin pants barely

reached the top of his socks; and wherever he went that broken-peaked, greasy cap went, too.

But—he was the greatest. Dick Voynow recognized that and gave him a job with the Wolverines, and Bix made that band eventually better known than the Blue Friars or Husk O'Hare's Wolverines. They played for dances down at Indiana University, and on one of these dates a student by the name of Hoagy Carmichael heard Bix. Hoagy was a big wheel at Indiana; he was responsible for bringing the Wolverines down to Bloomington for eight straight week-ends. That was the beginning of the Bix legend—a legend that still goes on, long after Bix has drunk himself into a premature grave.

It is difficult to assay the magic of Bix on either the piano or the cornet. The kid himself was all wrong, a mixed-up, neurotic country boy who lived and died a hick; he over-did everything that he shouldn't have done (especially drinking) and he under-did all that he should have done. He was a failure as a person, and his musicianship was poor. All anybody could say of him was: it goes in so wrong, but it comes out so right. He blew into that horn, and it came out like a girl saying yes, or so Eddie Condon thought. But then, Eddie was Bix's best friend. "I hoped I would be stuck forever with Beiderbecke," Eddie said of his first experience with Bix's playing. And you could get hypnotized listening to Bix play "In A Mist."

In the early 20's the musicians used to gather after-hours in a little speakeasy at State and Lake. It was a cellar with cement walls and an upright piano, and it served only one drink—cheap gin. The bands playing the Chicago Theatre would drop down after the last show at night to get away from their own schmaltz and enjoy a bit of jamming with the "righteous" musicians who had not sold their souls for long-term contracts with the big agencies. Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey would always drop down when they were in town; so would Ben Pollack and Paul Whiteman. One night Whiteman's three Rhythm Boys were in

the joint, transfixed until 7:30 A.M. by the magic of Bix's cornet —Al Rinker, Harry Barris and Bing Crosby. Bix himself at this time had prostituted himself temporarily (he hated himself every morning) and was doing a stint with the portly, self-styled "King of Jazz." On this particular night (or morning), a string of long, black sedans slid up in front of the speak, and Bing Crosby explained to Bix: "Some fellow wants us all to go out to Cicero and play at a party. I told him we'd go." Bing had laryngitis at the time—from the Chicago water, Bix told him. Anyway, they all went out to Cicero to play at a place called The Greyhound for this party, which seemed to be made up mostly of blue-jawed young men in dark double-breasted suits with blondes to match. A stocky, evil-looking character kept yelling at the band, and Bix, who didn't like to be yelled at, shouted to him to shut up or he'd come down off the stand and punch him in the nose. The fellow gave Bix a queer look and buttoned his lip. Later Eddie Condon, who was in the party, told Bix the name of the guy he had threatened to punch in the nose—Bottles Capone, Al's brother.

The gangsters, incidentally, owned a lot of the places where the jazzmen played. It was not at all unusual for Capone and his retinue to stalk in, order the customers out and the doors closed, pass out $100 bills to the band, and spend the night listening to hot music. Sometimes the Syndicate boys even transacted a little business in the clubs. Wingy Manone, the one-armed trumpeter, remembers that one night in the Manley Club his solo on "Clarinet Marmalade" was messed up when one hood whipped a machine-gun out of a violin case and stitched a line of slugs across the band-stand in a vain effort to intercept the flight of a former friend out of the joint and into the alley.

But to get back to Bix. His drinking finally caught up with him; he took the cure, but it didn't take. He began spoiling those magnificent solo flights on the cornet that he had once

taken with such ease; he ruined recording dates; he lost jobs. Whiteman wanted to keep him with his organization, but Bix didn't have the stamina for the road. His deterioration broke the hearts of the jazzmen who loved him, but there was nothing they could do. Finally, penniless and mentally muddled, he died of pneumonia in 1931. He was a legend almost immediately, and a Harvard professor's wife by the name of Dorothy Baker wrote a book about him called *Young Man with A Horn*. It was a pretty accurate book, except that in the end a girl got Bix. In real life no girl could have gotten close enough to him to tell the color of his eyes. Later a movie was made from the book with Kirk Douglas playing the part of Bix.

In the late 20's Chicago-style jazz got out of the smoky little speakeasies and the gangster-operated night clubs where it had been born and swept across the country; the west wind carried it to joints like the Babalu in Hollywood and the east to New York's 52nd Street, which it soon transformed into "Swing Street" ("swing" being a silly synonym for jazz). Its popularity carried the Chicago bands and jazzmen all over the country. As usual when a Chicago innovation catches on (it happened in the movies, radio, and television, too) the great entertainment centers on the east and west coasts were able to outbid Chicago for its own product, and the jazzmen spent more and more time in 52nd Street, the Village, and Sunset Strip. But most of them considered Chicago their base of operations and they still played more in Chicago than anywhere else. They all moved around a great deal, and while they occasionally made phenomenal amounts of money (Artie Shaw told this writer that his income was $30,000 a week at the top of his popularity) they were frequently broke, dependent on friends for hand-outs, locked out of their hotels, and subsisting chiefly on drinks cadged in musicians' hangouts like Jimmy Plunkett's in New York and My Cellar in Chicago's Loop. They would leave their instruments in their favorite joints to forestall the impounding

of same by indignant landlords, and it was a rare cornet, trombone, or clarinet that had not been in and out of Iskovitch's Pawn-Shop in Chicago forty or fifty times. These alternations of boom and bust (with more bust than boom) were the fault of the jazzmen themselves; they thought of themselves as artists and they would not play "schmaltz" or "corn," which was where the big money was in music. Sometimes when things were really tough they would take on a despised "corn" job, playing in a dance-hall or theatre or restaurant, but they hated every minute of it and their playing showed it. On one occasion, Wingy Manone, hunger gnawing at his vitals, scraped together an orchestra to play a two-night stand at the world's foremost Palace of Schmaltz, the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago. The boys put on the required paper hats and sawed away unhappily at the insipid waltzes to which The Waltz King had accustomed the Aragon patrons. Wingy Manone was making motions like an orchestra leader, and even had a baton. But when a jazz musician who happened to be at the Aragon that night came up to the bandstand and called out "take off the false whiskers, Wingy, I know you!" the band fell out laughing, broke off a waltz, and ripped the roof off with an incendiary Jazzin' Babies Blues. The manager of the Aragon heard the sacrilege, and the next night The Waltz King was back, keening his somnambulistic dance-music.

But, boom or bust, the boys had fun. They enjoyed life. My Cellar, at Randolph and Clark, was a favorite after-hours hangout. The management always had a good jazz outfit playing and other musicians would drop around after work and sit in. The place had only 150 seats and these were usually jammed, late at night, with musicians and their friends. All the Chicago jazzmen came, at one time or another, to sit in—Dave Rose, Bud Freeman, Joe Sullivan, Frank Teschemaker, George Brunies, Kusby Bosky, Mezz Mezzrow, Eddie Condon, and Earl Hines were only a few of the jazz greats who sat in when Wingy

Manone had his band in My Cellar. Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey would always be there when they were in town, bringing their bands with them, as usual. A brash youngster by the name of Milton Berle would hang around, trying to act as master of ceremonies. He would get up on the stand and start to tell a joke, and that would be the cue for the band to cut loose with the brass and blow him out the door and into the street. The bands liked to play My Cellar because the management permitted the musicians to sell gin under the piano at $2 a throw.

In the late twenties and early thirties "Battles of Music" were all the rage. These were cutting contests on a grand scale, with two bands playing alternately and being rewarded by the plaudits of the crowd. Whichever band got the most applause won. On one occasion the Midway Gardens staged a "Battle of Music" between bands led by Benny Goodman and Wingy Manone respectively. Benny and Wingy were the best of friends and knew each other's repertoires perfectly. For this "Battle" Wingy had Bud Freeman, Frank Teschemaker, Don Carter, Eddie Condon, Paul Friedman, and Freddie Rollison. Benny had Elmer Schoebel, Mel Stitzel, Murphy Steinberg, and Frank Black. Wingy won the toss to see who played first, but the madcap trumpeter outsmarted himself. He thought that second would be the best spot, and so chose to play after Benny's outfit had done its stuff. This was an egregious error; Wingy's band knew only ten tunes and Benny knew exactly what they were. So he played every one of them, beginning with "Panama" and ending up with "Riverboat Shuffle." There was nothing for Wingy to do but play them all over again, while the crowd made loud, unappreciative noises.

The sacrifices that the jazzmen were willing to make to play their own kind of music was well illustrated during the Chicago World's Fair of '33-'34. During the first year of the Fair all the music played inside was of the schmaltz variety (the second year a spot called Harry's New York Bar featured good

jazz). However, the proprietor of a joint called The Brewery just outside the 23rd Street entrance decided that if he was going to deflect any of the crowd into his establishment he would have to have a band that could be heard. He signed up Wingy Manone. "Go out there and blow 'em down!" he told Wingy. You didn't have to tell a good jazzman like Wingy anything like that twice, and blow 'em down was what he did. He played so loudly that bands inside the Fair were thrown out of tune. He completely drowned out Ben Bernie, who was playing at a place inside the Fair near the 23rd Street entrance, and the Old Maestro registered a vigorous protest with the authorities, who told him nothing could be done. At this time Jack Teagarden, the trombonist from Texas, was selling his soul to a schmaltz outfit inside the Fair for $90 a week. Like everybody else inside, Jack could hear Wingy's outfit blasting away at The Brewery, and his conscience bothered him. Finally one night Jack and his trombone showed up at The Brewery. "You win!" he said to Wingy. He played out the season at The Brewery for $60 a week.

One of the peculiarities of jazz musicianship was the fact that the men cared nothing for billing. Indeed, it was sort of an unwritten law among them that nobody should ever be advertised as "the greatest," etc. Sometimes when a night club manager unwittingly violated the code, there was trouble. On one occasion the pianist Art Tatum was doing a single upstairs at the Three Deuces on State Street. Art didn't know about it, but the manager had put out a sign proclaiming Art as "tops on piano" or some such. Before long a morose colored man, known all over the South Side as "The Tiger" showed up at the Three Deuces bar. He was a good jazz piano player, and he resented Art's billing. He informed the bartender that he had come to "cut" Art. When Art was informed of this, he ordered two bottles of beer. This was an augur, for Art drank beer only when he was upset, and then only one bottle. He drained the bottles,

one after another, and sat down at the piano. He started out on "Honeysuckle Rose," and by the third chorus "The Tiger" had had enough. He got up and went out. He knew he couldn't "cut" Art.

The jazzmen, as a rule, didn't have very strong family ties. Many of them came from poor homes, and their families had a hard time understanding why, if they had to take up an undistinguished profession like music, they had to pick the branch of it that paid the least. Wingy Manone once wired his parents in New Orleans that he was on his way home for a visit. His father wired back: "Don't bother. Just send money you would use for transportation. We got your picture." They didn't have much luck with wives, either. The jazzman's preoccupation with music was likely to intrigue a girl before marriage, but afterwards, when he kept right on putting music—and often gin—ahead of matrimony, the bride was likely to get a bit miffed. This magnificent disinterest in everything but his art and its artifacts extended beyond women to politics, religion, sports, and everything else. In 1940, Wingy Manone wrote the song that was the jazzmen's perfect commentary on international affairs: "Stop the War, Them Cats Are Killing Themselves."

1939 was the last great year of Chicago jazz. That February, the visitor to the Windy City might have listened to Wingy Manone and his band at the Three Deuces on State Street, and upstairs both Jimmy McPartland and Art Tatum were doing singles. Gene Krupa was at the College Inn of the Sherman, Stuff Smith was at the LaSalle Hotel, Bob Crosby's Bobcats were at the Blackhawk Restaurant, and Fletcher Henderson was at the Grand Terrace.

The best of the Chicago-style jazz outfits was, by common consent, the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans. Red McKenzie and Eddie Condon put this band together in 1927 to record *China Boy* and *Sugar*. The nucleus of the group was the old

Austin High gang, plus Eddie himself, and Gene Krupa. The Chicagoans finally broke up in New York after playing the Palace there, and did not reassemble until fifteen years later, when they came together to play the Town Hall Jazz Concerts in New York and to work in the night club which Eddie Condon opened on East Third Street in the Village. And there, with one or two exceptions, they are today.

Why did Chicago become the jazz capital of the world in the first place, and why is it not the jazz capital of the world today?

Jazz, it must be remembered, is a by-product of illegality. It was spawned in New Orleans honky-tonks and cabarets for the edification of frequenters of brothels. It represented, in part, a loud, impolite yawp at everything that was. It was the musical commentary of the have-nots, of the demi-monde, on the customs, habits, and institutions of the upper-world. Indeed, this is so obvious that for awhile the theoreticians of Marxism were proclaiming jazz as "class" music, and the big Communist rallies in New York's Madison Square Garden always featured a hot band and a clutch of jitter-bugs.

In 1918 Chicago, more than any other American city, was ripe to yawp at the rest of the country. Opposition to Prohibition was stronger in Chicago than anywhere else; the city was still priding itself on its frontier lustiness, and was sore as a boil at the do-gooders who had fastened the Great Experiment upon the country. Jazz was the perfect commentary on Prohibition: raw, incisive, cutting. When it was kicked out of the brothels of New Orleans it found a ready welcome in the speakeasies of Chicago. Mothered by madames, it was nurtured to maturity by Syndicate hoodlums.

Then, too, a large population of Negroes was essential to the appreciation and cultivation of jazz, and outside of New York Chicago was the only northern city with enough Negroes to insure the early jazzmen an audience and a living. New York, too, was off the beaten track, away from the river highways

along which "the blues" flowed out of New Orleans. And the eastern metropolis was culturally superior to jazz, as was Hollywood, until the Broadway agents scented money in it. When jazz was "set," New York and Hollywood would buy it and would outbid Chicago for it, as they always did, but neither of the entertainment capitals could create it.

Today Chicago is not the jazz capital because there isn't enough jazz to have a capital. If there were, Chicago would be it. Jazz never recovered from the war, and even before the war, it was suffering from the competition of radio and the movies. The repeal of Prohibition, the demise of the so-called Jazz Age, the Depression—all of these contributed to the devaluation of jazz. Today it survives as the fetish of a few fans and the personal hobby of a few professionals and quite a few amateurs. There are enough of them to keep places like Nick's and Eddie Condon's in New York, Kid Ory's in Los Angeles, the Hangover in San Francisco, and the Blue Note, Streamliner and Jazz Limited in Chicago going profitably. Negro theatres, like the Apollo in Harlem and the Regal on Chicago's South Side still feature jazz bands—Earl "Fatha" Hines, Count Basie, and Ole Satchmo are still playing that righteous music, and playing it better than ever. Occasionally a big hotel will book the jazzmen, but for the most part they prefer the bands that play sweet music. The saloons use what are now called "combos" which feature strings (anathema to the true jazzman) and only rarely is jazz featured on radio or in television.

One of the interesting things about jazz is the number of amateurs who have taken it up as a hobby. One of the most avid of these "Gentlemen Amateurs of Hot Music" is a Chicago attorney by the name of Squirrel Ashcroft, who lives in Evanston. Squirrel's wife, Janie, knew Bix personally. The Ashcrofts have a grand piano and all the necessary recording equipment set up in their living room in Evanston, which is partially soundproofed. Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Gene

Krupa, and Joe Bushkin are only a few of the professional jazzmen who have sat in at jam sessions at the Ashcrofts. On a typical night there you might find Benny or Gene jamming with Bud Wilson, one of the world's finest trombonists—and an executive of U. S. Steel. Or Bill Priestley might be there, matching trumpet licks with Wingy Manone. He is one of America's leading architects. Paul Smith would most likely be present—a guitarist who wastes most of his time being an advertising executive. Another "gentleman amateur" is Joe Slovak, the celebrated surgeon who plays the clarinet and whom jazz musicians agree is one of the best jazz musicians America has ever produced. And Squirrel himself is a pianist who, when he was at Princeton, was offered the piano chair in the Wolverines, which had Bix on cornet.

A jam session at the Ashcrofts is not for the panty-waisted. Not too long ago Bob Crosby's Bobcats were at the Blackhawk and Bud Freeman's Summa Cum Laude band was at the Panther Room. Monday was Bob Crosby's night at the Ashcrofts, and Tuesday was Bud's. Bob, Jess Stacy, Ray Bauduc, Eddie Miller, Muggsy Spanier, and Bob Haggart played all Monday night and into Tuesday morning. Tuesday night Bud, Eddie Condon, Max Kaminsky, Pee Wee Russell, Brad Gowans, and Dave Bowman camped in the living room until Wednesday rolled around, the hot choruses of Big Leg Mama and Last Call For Alcohol rolling profanely out across the campus of Garrett Biblical Institute and the National Headquarters of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

What do the jazzmen think of the amateurs? Max Kaminsky summed it up once when Joe Slovak, the surgeon, was sitting in with the band at Eddie Condon's. Max leaned over and said: "Hey, Joe, do you mind if I take out your appendix?"

Man, isn't everything the blues?

I AM AFRAID *I am too much of a musician not to be a romanticist. Without music life to me would be a mistake.*—NIETZSCHE *to Georg Brandes, 1888.*

Chapter V

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik

SOMETIME in the 1920's a big charity affair was being held in the Auditorium, and Mary Garden, the star of the Chicago Civic Opera Company, was asked by the directors to go over to the Stock Exchange and auction off a few tickets. Mary, always glad to be in male company, agreed. But no sooner had she gone into her spiel than a "dreadful-looking" man with long gray hair and shabby clothes came up behind her and tried to shoot her. A policeman wrestled his revolver away from him before he could pull the trigger, but Mary was told she'd better go home. Later, when the police asked the man why he wanted to kill Miss Garden, he confined himself to a single statement:

"She talks too much."

The police finally decided that this indicated mental instability and hustled the "dreadful-looking" man off to a place where he would not have to put up with so much chatter. Most of musical Chicago, however, considered the poor chap a martyr and some of Miss Garden's colleagues in the opera company were ungracious enough to insist that if he was crazy just for wanting to shut up Mary Garden, then the entire personnel of the Civic Opera should also be considered *non compos mentis.*

Talk too much she certainly did (and does) but when the

subject under consideration is music in Chicago, Mary Garden can't be ignored. Her contribution ranks second only to that of Theodore Thomas. Whether as Melisande in Debussy's haunting *Pelleas et Melisande*, as Salome in the Strauss opera, or as the juggler in Massenet's moving *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, Mary was incomparable. She could sing. She could act. With the voice of an angel, the good looks of an Ingrid Bergman, and the stage presence of a Sarah Bernhardt, she combined the sly sense of bawdry of a Lily St. Cyr. She was Oscar Wilde's "curieuse et sensuelle" lady to perfection. Born in Scotland but brought up in Chicago, she was the kind of gabby, breezy, and publicity-wise home-grown product who was as right for the town as the town was right for her. For twenty years, as diva and "directa" of the company, she was the personification of operatic glamor. And in 1950, when she came back to Chicago on a lecture tour, full of years and honors, everybody loved her all over again, even though she still "talked too much."

At that, the man who tried to shoot Mary was in the best Chicago Civic Opera tradition of comic violence. The old Auditorium was the Ebbetts Field of opera—anything could happen there. The Metropolitan in New York was staid by comparison; La Scala in Milan positively stagnant. Where but in Chicago could an astonished audience behold two gentlemen of color, derby hats cocked on the sides of their heads, casually walking up the Nile in the scene from *Aida* where Radames sings "I am dishonored"? Extras in the opening scenes of the opera, they were through for the night and had taken what they supposed to be the shortest route to the exit, which happened to be up the bed of the Nile and out across a stage teeming with Egyptian soldiery. Radames, Aida, and the soldiers went whooping after them while Maestro Campinini, in the pit, tore his hair and howled imprecations in Italian. The audience, of course, shrieked. Where but in Chicago did Marguerite D'Alvarez, playing Delilah in Saint-Saens *Samson and Delilah*, slip

at the top of the steps at her grand entrance, bump on her posterior all the way to the bottom, and slide out in a sitting position to the middle of the stage? The audience gasped, but she rolled over and came up singing on pitch. Thereafter she put so much rosin on her sandals that the squeak was discernible as far away as the bar of the Congress Hotel. Where but in Chicago could the eminent French basso, Marcel Journet, be accused of plucking pigeons off the ledge outside his hotel-room window, eating them, and stuffing the feathers down the toilet? Where but in Chicago would one expect to find the celebrated tenor, Jean de Reszke, holding off an armed lunatic with his prop sword while Nellie Melba, playing the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* with him, slammed the balcony shutters shut and screamed that her voice was gone? Where but in the dear, daffy old Auditorium would some misanthrope place a homemade bomb that fizzed venomously and made an awful stink but which, if it had gone off, wouldn't have done as much damage as a trick cigar? Campinini, conducting, smelled the smell and saw the smoke, and immediately went into a routine that he had rehearsed a hundred times in his mind: he led the orchestra and chorus in a frenzied "Star Spangled Banner" while a valiant fireman wrapped the infernal machine in his coat and deposited it in the gutter. The audience was quite calm and even amused, but the orchestra and company, made up largely of excitable Latins, could hardly finish the performance. Where but in Chicago would Billy Sunday denounce Mary Garden as a wanton on Monday and invite her out for a drink (ice cream soda) on Tuesday? It seemed that Billy's blast at *Salome* was strictly for the record; he really didn't care. It was the beginning of a long, cordial friendship between the peppery little evangelist and Wilde's wicked enchantress, Salome-Garden.

One could go on like this for several pages. For several hundred pages, as a matter of fact. Go on talking about how Lucy Page Gaston, founder of the Anti-Cigarette League, tried to

get Wolf-Ferrari's *The Secret of Suzanne* barred from the repertoire because Suzanne smoked three (she counted them) cigarettes. "It is enough to turn one forever against grand opera!" said Miss Gaston, as she groped her way through the polluted air of the Auditorium. Go on talking about how Rosa Raisa, in the scene from *Tosca* where Tosca throws herself on the body of Mario, repaid an old score with Alessandro Dolci by slamming her elbows into his generous mid-section and grinding her high heels into the palms of his hands as he lay there, presumably executed and hors de combat.

But all this, amusing though it may be, would eventually obscure a very important point—that Chicago opera, in the days of the permanent Auditorium companies, was as good as any in the world and better than most. It did not run a placid and uninterrupted course from success to success, as did the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but in spite of the comic overtones and the spectacular law-suits that accompanied its progress from the old Auditorium to the present magnificent (and empty) Civic Opera House, it gave the Mid-West opera comparable—and in many ways superior—to that to be found in New York or Boston, and even to that which was offered at Covent Garden, L'Opéra Comique, or La Scala.

Music got off to a good start in Chicago. John Kinzie, the first permanent white settler, brought his violin along when he took over an old Indian hut on the north bank of the Chicago river near where it runs into the lake. But he was a bashful man, and played only in the privacy of his cabin. Kinzie arrived in 1804, and it was not until 1833, when Chicago was a flourishing little village of six hundred souls, that any kind of a public performance was given. That was by Mark Beaubien, the Lake Street ferryman, who also ran a public house called the Saugenash Tavern at the northeast corner of Lake and Market. Mark, a jolly French-Canadian, constituted the entire orchestra at the weekly dances which took place in the dining room of the tav-

ern. Later his brother, Jean Baptiste Beaubien, imported a piano and the two played violin and piano duets for the edification of the citizenry and an appreciative if somewhat mystified claque of Indians and coyotes which circled the tavern while the "concerts" were in progress.

In 1834 a Miss Wythe opened a "music school" in Chicago, and the same year saw the organization of the Old Settlers Harmonic Society. From then on the concerts of the society were the musical events of the year. They were held in the Presbyterian Church, and attendance was a considerable adventure, since in order to reach the church, which was located at the southwest corner of Lake and Clark, it was necessary to pick one's way through a slough and then tight-walk a slippery log across a swamp. In 1836 a choir was organized for St. James's Episcopal Church and the first organ in town was installed there. (Today both St. James's choir and organ are presided over by Leo Sowerby, one of the country's leading organists and composers of sacred music.)

As the town grew, there were other societies, like the Mozart, and a series of great German *Männerchöre*—the Germania, the Concordia, the Liederkranz. There was the Chicago Musical Union, the Mendelssohn Society, the Beethoven Society, the Oratorio Society, the Apollo Club, and, in later years, the Chicago A-Capella Choir. These choirs and societies were the glory of Chicago; their contribution to the cultural life of the town cannot be overestimated. They gave the city not only great choral music but also opera; at a time when New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans had their own opera companies, only these *Männerchöre* and singing societies preserved the musical heritage of Europe in Chicago. It is a pity that the records and programs of most of them were destroyed in the fire of '71.

In 1865 both the Musical Union and the Mendelssohn Society disbanded, but out of the wreckage stepped the Germania

Männerchor. This worthy organization soon split into two factions, one of which set itself up as the Concordia *Männerchor*. The intense competition between the two gave Chicago the best music it had heard up to that time. In February, 1870, the Germania produced *Der Freischütz*, and in April the Concordia fired back with *The Magic Flute*, with Mrs. Clara Huck, mother of Mrs. Marshall Field, Jr. in the leading role. In May the Germania replied with *Stradella*. The Liederkranz Society got into the act with *Masaniello*, part of *The Huguenots*, part of *Ernani*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, this latter at the McVickers Theatre. All three societies then sat back, breathing hard and glaring goodnaturedly at each other.

The leading figure in the Germania Society in those early days was the very personification of *Gemütlichkeit*, Emil Dietzsch. The Society held its social festivities at Dyhrenfurth Hall on Randolph Street, and these were jovially Olympian in character, with Dietzsch as the moving spirit. A big man with a deep bass voice, he convulsed everybody with his burlesque of the role of Marguerite in *Faust*. George Upton, in his memoirs, says of Dietzsch that he "combined the romance of Blondel, the mischief of Till Eulenspiegel, and the merry antics of Triboulet."[1] Dietzsch ran a restaurant on Wells Street and was an excellent chef in addition to his other accomplishments. Later the merry madcap of the Germania surprised everybody by running for coroner of Cook County and getting elected. His annual reports, published under the title "Coroner's Quest," were unique literary documents replete with humor, philosophy, and poetry. It's not easy to get humor into a coroner's report, but Dietzsch did it. No other Cook County coroner has even come close.

The beginning of symphonic music in Chicago can be traced back to another member of the old Germania *Männerchor*,

1. George P. Upton, *Musical Memories*. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1908), p. 280. George Upton was the *Tribune's* music critic for many years.

Julius Dyhrenfurth. Julius had left Germany in the 1830's; he was a violinist and he toured the United States with a pianist named Joseph Hermanns, giving "concerts." In 1847 he came to Chicago and tried to make a living with his violin, without conspicuous success. Thereupon he bought a few acres of land and started a truck farm, which did much better. However, Dhyrenfurth was a musician at heart and he couldn't resist the temptation to gather his fellow Germans together in his little farmhouse for evenings of orchestral music interspersed with beer-drinking, and out of these informal gatherings grew Chicago's first full-fledged orchestra. It was christened "The Philharmonic Society," and on October 25, 1850, it gave its first concert on the occasion of the dedication of Tremont Hall, which was nothing more or less than the ball room of the Tremont House. The musical *pièce de résistance* of the evening was the orchestra's rendering of an original composition by its 'cellist entitled "The Chicago Waltz."

This first Philharmonic Society proved to be an abortive effort, and Dyhrenfurth regretfully abandoned symphonic music and devoted himself to the Germania *Männerchor,* where he achieved his principal fame not as a musician but as the originator of four progressively more potent libations known within the Germania family as the bishop, the archbishop, the cardinal, and the pope. But the seed he had planted had fallen on good ground and one Philharmonic Society after another followed until, some three societies and eight conductors later, Hans Balatka appears on the scene. Balatka had come down from Milwaukee to conduct the annual Northwestern Sangerfest, and he had made such a good impression that the Philharmonic Society, duly incorporated now under a statute entitled "An Act To Encourage the Science of Fiddling," offered him the conductorship. Under Balatka the Philharmonic Society Orchestra became a real musical organization. It gave its first concert with Balatka at the baton at Bryan Hall, playing

a program which featured Beethoven's Second Symphony and the chorus music from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. It was the first performance of Wagner in Chicago, and it started the season off on the right foot. Soon the concerts were all the rage and crowds were turned away from Bryan Hall every time the orchestra played. During the six years that followed Balatka introduced Chicago to all of the Beethoven symphonies except the *Ninth;* the *E-Flat Major* and *G-Minor* of Mozart; the *C-Minor* and *F-Minor* of Gade; the *Scotch* of Mendelssohn, and the *Triumphal* of Ulrich. He also presented a distinguished host of instrumentalists and soloists. Later, after many ups and downs, Balatka resigned to devote himself to conducting the sängerbunds, and it was with the singing groups that he enjoyed his greatest success as a conductor.

Balatka had accomplished wonders with the orchestra, considering that he was forced to use players who were essentially amateurs. But in 1869 Theodore Thomas, from New York, had given his first concert in Chicago with his small but strictly professional Central Park Garden Orchestra, and alongside his incomparable direction and the smooth performance of his orchestra, the Chicago orchestra had seemed to be what it really was—a collection of enthusiastic and talented amateurs. Chicago remembered the Thomas orchestra and its conductor, and when the Chicago Orchestral Association was formed in 1891 "to maintain a permanent orchestra of the highest character" the baton was offered to Theodore Thomas, who was instructed to aim at "results comparable with those attained by the New York Philharmonic Society and the Boston Symphony Orchestra." For fourteen years Thomas did just that; he made the Chicago Symphony Orchestra one of the half-dozen best symphonic organizations in the world. Today's splendid Chicago Symphony is a monument to the persistence, zeal, and musical know-how of a man who, through his work with it, became the best-known conductor in America.

At the time Theodore Thomas took over the Chicago Symphony, he was fifty-three years old, tired, and nearly broke. He had never had a permanent orchestra, and the long tours he had been forced to make with his own little orchestra had frayed his nerves and shortened his temper to the point where he had a reputation in musical circles as a martinet whose emotions were on a very short fuse. So when Charles Norman Fay, a Chicago businessman, approached him on the subject of conducting the Chicago Symphony and coming to Chicago to live, he was not too surprised when Thomas cried "I would go to hell if they would give me a permanent orchestra!"

Chicago in 1891 was a slight improvement over hell as a place of residence, but Thomas could be pardoned for not seeing too much difference at first. There were some big Chicago names behind the new orchestra (Pullman, Armour, Field, Ryerson, McCormick, Potter, Blackstone, Sprague, Wacker, and others) but there was not actually very much cash, only $50,000 having been guaranteed on a three-year basis. After that the orchestra was supposed to pay its own way. Concerts would have to be played in the recently-dedicated Auditorium, a theatre which was acoustically perfect (the architect, Louis Sullivan, had seen to that) but much too large for symphony performances. Finally, New York musicians would have to be imported, and this would make for strained relations both with local musicians and with the union. Thomas brought in sixty men from New York and employed twenty-four local musicians, imperiously overriding the objections of the local talent and the union on grounds of artistic integrity. Somehow he got away with it (Petrillo was still selling newspapers).

Musically, Theodore Thomas was a conservative. Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms, and Berlioz were his favorites. He was often criticized for not playing more "American" music—a criticism to which he always replied by saying that he played all there was. He was a traditionalist who insisted on absolute fidelity to

the score, and was the only American conductor to execute the Bach embellishments according to specifications. Wagner was the only "modern" whom he favored, although in 1899 he introduced Strauss' *Heldenleben* to America.

As a director, Thomas was a disciplinarian. He tolerated no sloppy work. He drove his players hard, and he was inflexibly determined to have his own way. He never compromised with the shoddy; he took infinite pains. He would improvise extravagant stratagems to get exactly the right tone. To give the orchestra the feeling of the complexities in the 5/4 rhythm of the Tschaikowsky *Pathétique*, for instance, he made the largely Teutonic membership repeat the familiar phrase "Ein Glass Bier für mich," exactly one measure in length. Through work, work, work on the fundamentals of musicianship Thomas forged an orchestra the performance of which was always sensitive, basic, flawless. In five years he had an organization which he was proud to take to New York, and Chicago began to compare itself musically with Boston and Leipzig, the only other cities in the world where subscription pairs were heard in excess of the number (20) offered in Chicago.[2]

The Auditorium, where the orchestra played, was beloved by everybody but Thomas. A massive building, all the architectural genius of Louis Sullivan had gone into it, and its theatre, or opera house (Ferdinand Peck, who had financed it, conceived of it primarily in terms of opera) was an enormous room with a seating capacity in excess of 4800. The stage was deep, the acoustics perfect. But to Thomas it was a cavern; the necessary rapport between orchestra and audience could not be established. Moreover, since there were always empty seats, it was difficult to sell season tickets. It cost so much to heat and light it that rehearsals had to be held in other, smaller halls.

2. See John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra—A Social History of Musical Taste* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1951).

Thomas was delighted, therefore, when the trustees of the orchestra decided that the Auditorium was uneconomical. After some wrangling, in the course of which Thomas almost resigned, the trustees came up with a farseeing plan. They would endow the orchestra by building a permanent home with offices and studios which would provide income. The result was the present Orchestra Hall, seating 2500, which was dedicated in December, 1904. "Now we are in the same room as the audience," said Thomas approvingly.[3] But later he found much to criticize in the orchestra's new home. The stage was too shallow. The acoustics were inferior to the Auditorium. But it was undeniably a beautiful building, much more intimate than the Auditorium.

Thomas did not survive the opening of Orchestra Hall by more than a few weeks. In January 1905 he died, to be mourned the world over. The trustees of the orchestra voted to rename it The Theodore Thomas Orchestra, but later changed it back again to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra with "Founded by Theodore Thomas" as a subtitle.

Thomas was succeeded as conductor by 32-year-old Frederick Stock, a member of the viola section of the orchestra who had been serving as assistant conductor for some time. His appointment was only temporary while the trustees searched Europe for a new permanent conductor, but after considering Mottl, Weingartner, and Richter (the best known of the European conductors) they came back to Chicago and made Stock the permanent conductor. It was a wise choice; Stock held the post until his death in 1942.

Stock was much more liberal than Thomas. He excised the scores to shorten the playing time, and got more variety into the programs. A good illustration of the difference between Thomas and Stock is found in their handling of the Russian composers. Outside of an occasional performance of Tschaikowsky,

3. *Musical Courier*, Dec. 21, 1904, p. 21.

Thomas had little use for Russian music. Stock, however, presented the works of Glazounoff and Miaskowsky, displaying particular affection for the latter. Nine of Miaskowsky's symphonies were programmed in Chicago and his Sixth Symphony was given nine performances! In gratitude to the orchestra and its conductor, Miaskowsky composed his *Twenty-First Symphony* for the fiftieth anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and dedicated it "to its illustrious conductor."

Stock, however, shared with Thomas a strong feeling for the *mystique* of great music. He was unwilling to compromise with poor taste. Like Thomas, he replied to suggestions that the public did not like this or that symphony by saying "very well, we will play it until they do." Under both Thomas and Stock the Chicago public was not consulted about what it liked; it heard what the conductors considered good music, and that was that. Like Thomas, Stock considered the audience a class which needed education. A class also needs occasional disciplining; Thomas hated encores and often refused them, and Stock once halted a performance of *Moldau* to let the audience put on its wraps, gazing reprovingly out from the podium until the rustle subsided.

After the death of Frederick Stock in 1942, a series of guest conductors led the orchestra until 1943, when the distinguished Belgian, Désiré Defauw, was appointed as Stock's successor. Defauw held on for four years while a storm of criticism blew around him; the critics didn't like his programs, his conducting, his musicianship, or the way he wore his clothes. Defauw, on his part, made certain remarks about the Chicago critics which were considered *lèse majesté* by those august gentlemen, and there was great rejoicing when the Belgian was drummed out of town in 1947. He was succeeded by the controversial Artur Rodzinski, fresh from a losing fight with the trustees of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society. The critics who had panned Defauw loved the ineffable Artur, but trustees are

the same the world over and the bellicosity that had caused Rodzinski to be blackballed in New York soon made him *persona non grata* to the trustees in Chicago. He was too independent. Out he went, to be finally succeeded in 1950 by Rafael Kubelik. Kubelik, son of the Czech violinist Jan Kubelik and a former conductor of the Czech State Orchestra, jumped ship in England while on tour with that organization and came to the United States. After two years in Chicago, there are some signs that he may regret this and wish he had stayed under the comparatively beneficent knout of the Soviets.

In spite of its internal difficulties since the death of Frederick Stock, the history of the Chicago Symphony has been as placid as a summer day on Lake Calumet compared with that of the various opera companies that have followed one another on the Chicago scene. The first of these was a little, nameless group of four singers who came down from Milwaukee on Monday, July 29, 1850, to present *Sonnambula* at Rice's Theatre. The company was filled out with local amateurs, and the regular theatre orchestra was in the pit. As many of Chicago's thirty thousand people as possible crowded into Rice's that night, dressed to a fare-thee-well, with the men wearing swallow-tails and the women carrying lorgnettes. The "opry" went over very well, even though the applause came in the wrong places and was reserved mostly for the local amateurs, who were immediately recognized by their friends and neighbors. It looked like the beginning of a promising season, but on the second night the theatre burned down and the season went up in flames with it. Incidentally, one of the local extras during this one-night opera season was J. H. McVicker, who was soon to build his own theatre, and who sang "as if he were the whole show so that the audience might be sure to hear him."[4]

Mr. Rice soon built another theatre, but in the meantime the

4. George P. Upton, *Musical Memories* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1908), p. 226.

ballroom of the Tremont House was fitted up for stage presentations and called Tremont Hall. Adelina Patti, who had sung in the dining room of the hotel as a little girl in return for gifts of dolls, candy, and canary birds, made her first Chicago concert appearance in the Hall and was a prime favorite in town from then on. In 1889, when the Auditorium was dedicated, the elderly Adelina, with a great career behind her, was the dedicatory soloist. Not until after she had obliged with a rendition of "Home, Sweet Home" did Chicago consider the Auditorium properly prepared for prospective glory.

The McVickers Theatre was completed in 1858, and from then on various small companies, mostly from New York, presented seasons of opera and variety at that house, at Tremont Hall, and at Rice's. In 1865 a magnificent new edifice known as the Crosby Opera House was erected on the north side of Washington Street midway between State and Dearborn, and straightway became the cultural capitol of the town. It was four stories high, and built in French style. The auditorium was divided into an orchestra, with parquette and dress circle on the main floor, a balcony with fifty-six decorated boxes, and a family circle. Sunken panels in the ceiling contained portraits of famous composers. Combined with the opera house were art galleries and studios for artists, music teachers, etc. Built by a distinguished citizen of the city, Mr. Uranus H. Crosby, the house was one of the most modern and comfortable in the land. Here, from 1865 to 1871, concert manager Jacob Grau presented such attractions as the Germania *Männerchor,* a half dozen different opera companies, the Mendelssohn Quintette Club of Boston, Clara Louise Kellogg, Ole Bull, and many others. In 1867 the short life of the Crosby Opera House was enlivened by a lottery with possession of the house itself as the grand prize. Crosby had thought up this idea as a means of getting out of the red, and while the lottery was a huge success, Crosby had to leave town as a result of it. The suspicion was

that he had rigged things so that ownership of the house stayed in the family. Anyway, the winner of the lottery was never found and before you could say "fraud!" Uranus had retired to a small town in New England and his brother Albert was managing Crosby's Opera House. The lottery had raised some $200,000. The truth of the matter was never clearly established, but Uranus Crosby left Chicago with a smudge on his hitherto lilywhite reputation. However, it didn't matter much, as Crosby's, along with almost every other theatre, concert hall, museum, and music studio in Chicago was burnt down in the great conflagration of October 1871.

Nothing of exceptional importance happened in the musical life of Chicago from the time Crosby's burned down to the happy day in 1889 that the Auditorium was dedicated. However, the town was a long time in recovering from the tone deafness induced by the Chicago Jubilee of 1873, an affair designed to celebrate the rebuilding of the city. In June of that year an enterprising showman by the name of Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore put on a three-day musical binge in the new Lake Shore Railroad passenger station. The station was two blocks long and accommodated 40,000 people. Gilmore had a three-hundred piece band and a chorus of one thousand voices; he presented "The Hallelujah Chorus," "The Heavens are Telling," "The Star-Spangled Banner," "The American Hymn," the "Gloria" from Mozart's *Twelfth Mass*, and the "Anvil Chorus"—utilizing all the anvils available on the South Side of Chicago for the last number. The wing-ding concluded with an "elegant and recherché ball" in the rebuilt Chamber of Commerce building, with three orchestras playing—one for the dance, one for the promenade, and one for the "collation." The city was like to bust its buttons with pride over the Jubilee, which was probably the loudest festival in the world's history.

One of the finest artists, as well as one of the most eccentric screwballs, to appear in Chicago in the period between the end

of Crosby's and the beginning of the Auditorium was the Italian tenor, P. Brignoli. A singer of the romantic school, his *bel canto* was as perfect for a tenor as Patti's was for a soprano, and he was a great favorite in town. He first came to Chicago with an Italian opera troupe in 1859, and liked the town so much that he thereafter spent most of his time there, appearing in both opera and concerts every year.

Brignoli had a fine voice. George Upton, the *Tribune's* music critic, says of him that: "to hear him sing 'M'Appari' and 'Il Mio Tesoro,' or the music of Manrico and Edgardo, was to listen to vocalization of absolute beauty."[5] But, as is so often the case, it was not his voice but his unusual personality that endeared him to the public. He was very nervous and walked with an awkward gait, and the presence of a prima donna invariably threw him into a state of acute jitters. The platonic stage embraces of opera were too much for him, and he would implore the prima donnas (who always overdid such matters anyway) not to touch him. He was extremely superstitious and would never go anywhere or do anything on a Friday. The number *thirteen* frightened him half to death; he would never sit thirteen at a table or otherwise associate himself with that number. His oddest superstition, though, was the old deer's head which he carried with him as a mascot and to which he was emotionally attached much as a child may be to a teddy-bear or a blanket. He would talk and sing to it, and at night he would place it on the window sill to insure good weather on the following day. If the day turned out well he would congratulate the deer's head and pet it, but if the weather was bad he would box its ears and swear at it in Italian. If the elements were abominable he would not speak to the deer's head until the sun shone again. His feeling for this mangy relic of the hunt bordered on the pathological. Brignoli's last public appearance in Chicago was

5. Upton, *Musical Memories*, p. 122.

in 1884 in Hershey Hall; after that he went downhill both in health and finances and shortly thereafter died penniless.

Louis Sullivan's Auditorium opened on Monday night December 9, 1889, with sonorous speech-making by the city fathers in which it was announced to the country that, even as Athens had been the school for the Greece of Pericles, Chicago would now take over the musical education of the United States. There was a dedicatory ode by Harriet Monroe and two songs by old Adelina Patti, "Patti the Divine," who by now was not anywhere nearly as divine as she had been twenty years before. But she sang "Home, Sweet Home" and nobody minded that she really couldn't sing any more. It was the most brilliant opening in Chicago history; years later Julius Rosenwald was to tell how, unable to get a ticket, he crashed the gate by slipping in through the stage entrance and losing himself in the crowd. President Harrison was present, and he wrote his name in gold lettering on the lobby wall. The Apollo Musical Club sang, and Clarence Eddy played Theodore Dubois' "Triumphal Fantasie" for organ and orchestra.

Following the dedication, there was a four-week season of grand opera. Francisco Tamagno, "king among tenors," sang Romeo to Patti's Juliet; he was also starred in *Il Trovatore* and shared billing with Emma Albani in *Huguenots* and with Nordica in *Aida*. Patti was featured in *Lucia de Lammermoor*, *Semiramide*, *Martha and Sonnambula*. The season ended in something of a burlesque when the whole troupe came down with the flu, but the first season of opera at the Auditorium had played to over 100,000 people and house manager Milward Adams hugged $232,952 to his bosom. Auditorium opera was off and running.

In 1910 the first permanent Chicago Opera Company was formed, with a large assist from Mr. Oscar Hammerstein in New York. Hammerstein, he of the spade beard and high silk

hat, always declared that opera was not a business but a disease, but if it was, Mr. H. was its Typhoid Mary. He loved opera, lost phenomenal amounts of money on it, and couldn't leave it alone. In 1910 he was engaged in a titanic struggle in New York with the Metropolitan. He had built his own theatre, called the Manhattan Opera House, and had tenanted it with an excellent company which he was sure would sing the Metropolitan right out of town. He had Mary Garden, who had been a sensation in Paris, John McCormack, Maurice Renaud, Hector Dufranne, and Gustave Huberdeau. He had brought Cleofonte Campinini to this country to conduct. The Manhattan's presentations of French opera were undeniably superior to those of the Met. But the Met had Caruso, Slezak, Gadski, and Scotti, Toscanini and Hertz to conduct, and Gatti-Casazza to manage. The Met was, in effect, two grand opera companies, a German and an Italian, each with its own manager, conductor, chorus, and principals. Against this two-headed dragon, St. George Hammerstein jousted in vain. The Met had too much money for him, and at the end of the 1910 season he threw in the towel. Hammerstein signed an agreement to keep out of the operatic field in New York for ten years.

It was a group of Metropolitan Opera trustees who were instrumental in transferring the defunct Hammerstein troupe to Chicago. Knowing of Chicago's interest in acquiring a permanent company, the New Yorkers got in touch with men of substance in the Windy City and persuaded them to acquire the assets of the old Manhattan Opera Company. They had an ulterior motive—they wanted to bury the ubiquitous Hammerstein once and for all by getting his company as far away from New York as possible, for they knew that Oscar was always dangerous. The Chicagoans, enthusiastic about the Manhattan Opera Company, formed a new Chicago organization known as the Chicago Opera Company, with Harold McCormick as president and Charles G. Dawes and Otto Kahn as vice-presi-

dents. Andreas Dippel was released from the Met to become general manager of the Chicago company, and Campinini was engaged as musical director and first conductor. An assistant stage manager was Carlo Muzio, the father of a little girl named Claudia who was later to become one of the brightest stars in the operatic firmament. Garden, McCormack, and the rest of the Manhattan luminaries came with the deal, and the Met lent Farrar, Gadski, Melba and Caruso to the company for varying periods. Chicago met its brilliant new opera company on November 3, 1910, in the Auditorium; the program was *Aida* (of course) with Eleanora de Cisneros as Amneris and Jeanne Korolewicz as Aida. Bassi sang Radames, and Zucchi was the Messenger. The incidental dances were furnished by Esther Zanini and the Corps de Ballet. The house was dark on Friday, but on Saturday night, Mary Garden sang Melisande in Debussy's opera. Louis Sullivan's acoustically-perfect opera house finally had a company worthy of it.

The Chicago Opera Company, formerly the Manhattan Opera Company, functioned from 1910 to 1915. It presented many stars and many admirable performances. But, human nature being what it is, it will be remembered chiefly for the hassle over *Salome* which took place in late November, 1910, and which had repercussions all over the United States and even in Europe.

Mary Garden had sung the role of the Strauss-Wilde voluptary in Paris at the Opéra Comique and later in New York and Philadelphia without causing too much of a stir, even though she did the Dance of the Seven Veils with great abandon and added several flourishes of her own that Wilde hadn't thought of. But that was Paris, New York and Philadelphia. Chicago had more commercialized vice than any other city in the country in 1910, and the biggest, bawdiest red-light district in the world down on 22nd Street. South State Street was lined solidly with peep shows and unsavory theatrical exhibits. But a regi-

ment of *filles de joie* marching stark naked down Randolph Street at high noon could not have caused the municipal rumpus that Mary did when she kissed the head of Jokannan on the night of November 25.

It must be admitted that Mary put a little more of herself into the thing than the script called for. She herself admits that the role affected her deeply; that she *was* Salome, and that when she kissed the mouth of the head of Jokannan she was "wild with sensuality."[6]

Percy Hammond, the *Tribune's* dramatic critic, was in the audience that night of November 25 and Percy was not a notably prudish man. He wrote of Mary's Salome:

Wilde dreamt his Salome to be like Titian's painting. "Her lips disclose the boundless cruelty of her heart," he wrote; "her splendor is an abyss, her desire an ocean; the pearls of her breast die of love; the bloom of her maidenhood pales the opals and fires the rubies, while even the sapphires of her fevered skin lose the purity of their lustre."

Like Huysmans, he imagined her "strewn with jewels, all ringing and tinkling in her hair, and her ankles, her wrists, her throat, inclosing her hips, and with their myriad glitter heightening the unchastity of her unchaste amber flesh."

With this authoritative prospectus Miss Garden seems privileged to indulge in much burning detail, and she does. The velvet seductiveness in her wooing of Jokannan; the pantomime of her scorpion fury as a "woman scorned"; the venomous, insistent cruelty of the reiteration "Give me the head of Jokannan," are incredibly real. At the cistern the impatient rage of the cry, "Well, I tell thee there are not dead men enough," freezes with its dire import. She is a fabulous she-thing playing with love and death—loathsome, mysterious, poisonous, slaking her slimy passion in the blood of her victim.

A large order for a timid artiste, but timorousness is not among Miss Garden's characteristics. From the moment she beholds the "ivory prophet," gazing on him with hot and hungry stare, on

6. Mary Garden and Louis Biancolli, *The Mary Garden Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951.) p. 253.

through the passion-maddened scenes to the hideous finish, where, huddled over the head, she dies, Miss Garden makes no polite concessions. She is Salome according to the Wilde formulary—a monstrous oracle of bestiality. Even when Dalmores indulges in his realistic frenzies of drunken hysteria as Herod, and Salome stretches like a sphynx, silent and immobile upon a couch, it is still Salome who rivets the eye and mind. But it is simply a florid, excessive, unhampered *tour de force,* lawless and inhuman.[7]

Percy's account is a little lush, even for Percy. But if a hard-boiled dramatic critic could react to *Salome* in that way, one can readily imagine how the less thick-skinned would take it. Not only the role of Salome but the entire performance was given the full treatment by the cast and orchestra—yes, even the orchestra, for in the scene where the executioner goes down into the cistern to cut off Jokannan's head, Strauss had decreed that the double bass players in the orchestra should press their strings close up to the bridge and saw with their bows, the resulting sound being uncannily like that of a knife sliding along a bone. Campinini's men made the most of their grisly opportunity.

Anyway, the November 25th performance of *Salome* set off the siege guns of civic morality, which might better have been directed several blocks south and west. Arthur Burrage Farwell was president of something called the Chicago Law and Order League, and he had asked Police Chief Roy T. Steward to attend the first performance of *Salome*. The Chief, like so many police officers before and since, immediately set himself up in business as a critic. He pronounced judgment on *Salome:*

It was disgusting. Miss Garden wallowed around like a cat in a bed of catnip. There was no art in her dance that I could see. If the same show were produced on Halsted Street the people would call

7. As quoted by Edward C. Moore in his *Forty Years of Opera in Chicago* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1930), pp. 72-73.

it cheap, but over at the Auditorium they say it's art. Black art, if art at all. I would not call it immoral. I would say it is disgusting.[8]

"Cat in a bed of catnip!" For once Mary Garden couldn't find anything to say. But soon she got her voice back. She and Chief Steward didn't speak the same language nor think the same thoughts, thank God! "I always bow down to the ignorant and try to make them understand," said Mary, "but I ignore the illiterate."

Meanwhile Mr. Farwell, a truly big gun, boomed away in the newspapers:

> Mary Garden as Salome is a great degenerator of public morals.
>
> Performances like that of "Salome" should be classed as vicious and suppressed along with houses in the red light district.
>
> I wish Miss Garden would come to see me; I should like to reform her.
>
> I am a normal man, but I would not trust myself to see a performance of "Salome."[9]

The mental picture of the upright Mr. Farwell prowling the streets of Chicago, a lust-maddened he-thing after witnessing a performance of *Salome*, tickled the risibilities of a good many people in town, and the *Salome* uproar began to be tinctured with comedy. Mary issued a press release stating that "Mr. Farwell evidently hasn't much strength of character if he would not trust himself to see *Salome*."

And so the battle raged. Miss Garden should tone down the Dance of the Seven Veils. Nothing doing. Chief Steward said the performance was "vulgar and repulsive, not fit for a respectable public to witness." Mr. Dalmores was "shocked" at the uproar. Mme. de Cisneros, who played Herodias in the opera, announced that the Chief had made Chicago a place of ridicule

8. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

in the eyes of the civilized world. Even Oscar Hammerstein, back in New York, took a hand. In a telegraphed interview, he said:

> If they'd put some flannel petticoats and things on Miss Garden, that might help tone things, too. Mary really ought to be petticoated, I think, considering Chicago's climate. You know, when she worked for me she had a deadly fear when singing "Salome" of getting cold feet.[10]

In spite of all the uproar, it wasn't the police who finally closed up *Salome*. The Strauss opera had been scheduled for four performances, and the first three went on as scheduled, the Auditorium being packed for each. The house was sold out for the fourth, too, when Mrs. Harold McCormick, wife of the president of the board of trustees of the Chicago Opera Company, sent Mary Garden a terse note to the effect that there would be no fourth presentation of *Salome*. Mary, with customary directness, went to see her. She knew that Mrs. McCormick had seen all three of the previous performances.

The trouble, said Mrs. McCormick, was Mary. It had come to her in a flash after the third viewing of *Salome*. Now she knew the truth.

And what was "the truth," pray?

The vibrations were all wrong, said Mrs. McCormick, crossing her hands chastely over her breasts.

Mary went to Samuel Insull and other directors. They spoke to Mrs. McCormick, too, but all anybody could get out of her was that the "vibrations are all wrong."[11]

There was a lot of twang to Mrs. McCormick's "vibrations," because her husband was president of the board and she, herself, was one of the principal guarantors. So *Salome* was pulled and

10. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

11. Mary Garden and Louis Biancolli, *The Mary Garden Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), p. 210.

the collapse of Chicago morals narrowly averted. Later the company was invited to present the opera in such sinks of degeneracy as St. Louis and Milwaukee, which it did without incident.

There is not too much point in going into detail here about the many changes that took place in the personnel and organization in the grand opera set-up in Chicago between 1910, when the Chicago Opera Company was first formed, and 1932, when the Chicago Civic Opera Company breathed its last. There were always deficits, and these made for changes in administration which did not affect the opera company itself to any great extent. The Chicago Opera Company lasted until 1915, when it was metamorphosed into the Chicago Opera Association. From 1915 to 1922 it functioned under this name, and then became the Chicago Civic Opera Company. This was the period of Samuel Insull's leadership, and was the time of the opera's greatest glory, both financially and artistically. The Civic Opera Company lasted about as long as Insull did, collapsing under the staggering weight of the Depression and its brand new opera house in 1932. It was revived as the Chicago Grand Opera Company for one season, after which it died for good. In the fall of 1933 Fortune Gallo brought his San Carlo Opera Company into the Auditorium for a six-weeks season. There was a period when grand opera was presented in the vast Chicago Stadium by something called the Stadium Opera Company, but this went the way of all flesh in short order. In 1935 the Chicago City Opera Company was formed, and from 1935 to 1946 this company, with the Catherine Littlefield Ballet and a bevy of stars from the Metropolitan presented short seasons at the new Civic Opera House. Bampton, Flagstad, Jepson, Moore, Pons, Gigli, Hackett, Martinelli, Melton, Kipnis, Pinza, and Tibbett, among others, were heard in Chicago during this regime. Since 1946 the big house on Wacker Drive has been dark except for occasional visits by New York companies.

Some of these, like the New York City Center Company, have been pretty good, but not good enough for a town that remembers the days when it had the best opera in the world, sung by its own permanent company.

But to get back to Mary Garden. In 1921 she was named director of the opera, which meant that she not only had to sing but select the operas, supervise the performers, and busy herself otherwise in a role usually assigned to a man. She did this for a year with only a little more friction than might have been expected; as "directa" (she selected the title herself) she feuded with Ganna Walska, who was to have opened in Chicago in Leoncavallo's *Zaza*, and sent Mme. Walska huffing back to New York; she also tiffed with Gino Marinuzzi, who had succeeded Campinini after the latter's death the previous year, and that bewildered gentleman was demoted to the position of conductor (he had been "artistic director"). The business manager resigned. Various members of the cast announced that they were contemplating nervous breakdowns. But Mary hung on for a year, and artistically it was a very good year indeed.

The company at this time was the best ever. Claire Dux and Edith Mason made their debuts that season, and in addition to Mary herself there were Galli-Curci, Koshetz, Macbeth and Raisa; Claessens and Van Gordon; Johnson, Marshall, Muratore, and Schipa; Baklanoff, Rimini, Defrere, and Uhl; Cotreuil, Wolf, and Trevisan. Giorgio Polacco, brought over from Europe by Mary, was the principal conductor. The season opened with a performance of Saint-Saens *Samson and Delilah*, with Muratore as Samson and Marguerite D'Alvarez as Delilah, and, since this was considered a very soignée opera, the music critics could and did pontificate proudly that "Chicago is at last sophisticated."[12]

The principal event of that season was the first presentation

12. Edward C. Moore, *Forty Years of Opera in Chicago* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1930), p. 231.

of an opera which the late Cleofonte Campinini had commissioned Serge Prokofieff to write especially for presentation by the Chicago company. Prokofieff had been in America for a considerable period composing, conducting, and playing his own advanced compositions. He was considered way ahead of his time, and the commission was a very experimental one. Anyway, Prokofieff came up with something which he called *The Love For Three Oranges*, a combination of satire and burlesque based on an old 18th century story. Boris Anisfield designed some striking sets and costumes for it, and Mary had the company put it on although the music was considered enigmatic and technically difficult and the satire impossible to project across the footlights. Chicago found it amusing, even delightful in spots, but very hard to understand. However, the music was not tuneful, and the opera was regretfully put away shortly after its premiere, "for good and for all," Edward Moore thought, as far as Chicago was concerned. He was wrong, however—in 1950 the New York Center Company revived it both in New York and in Chicago and both cities found it diverting.

At the end of Mary Garden's career as "directa" she was glad to step out, although she remained a member of the opera company. Samuel Insull was president of the board by now, and things were being put on a businesslike basis. Insull wanted Mary to remain as codirector, but she turned the offer down, and Edward Johnson changed his singing role for an administrative one and took over as director.

Those years of the Insull regime, when Chicago opera was building up for its big let-down, were good ones. Adolph Bohm came in as ballet master; Claudia Muzio was signed away from the Met; Louise Homer was engaged; Feodor Chaliapin was inked for *Mefistofele*. Salaries topped those of the Met. Insull began planning a grand new opera house, with stores, offices, and studios to make it self-supporting. Operatically, there was

splendid experimentation: Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Sniegurotchka* (The Snow-Maiden) with sets and costumes by Nicolas Roerich and ballet by Bohm and Ludmilla; Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West*, with Raisa as the girl and Rimini as the sheriff; Boïto's *Mefistofele* with Feodor Chaliapin, with the Russian basso taking the whole thing apart and putting it together the way he wanted it. This latter was a tour de force; Edward Moore, the *Tribune's* music critic, said of it:

> Will those who saw the performance ever forget it, not only Chaliapin himself, but those surrounding him? Who, for instance, can forget the Brocken scene, where, after some instruction by the star, the customarily placid chorus was suddenly converted into a whirling, shrieking, frenzied crew of minor devils on a diabolical spree? And over them all sat the giant himself, half nude, gloating, flaming, dominating his followers, deriding the world, blazing out in his voice of golden trombone, sweeping back the stageful with a wave of the arm. It was one of the most magnificent scenes in all the history of Chicago opera.[13]

There were other memorable performances: Mary Garden in the American opera *Natoma*, with music by Victor Herbert; Mary Garden in Tolstoy's *Resurrection;* Mary Garden in Massenet's *Werther;* little Tamaki Miura taking a vacation from the role of Cho-Cho-San in *Madame Butterfly* to sing Aldo Franchetti's *Namiko San*. And there were some memorable debuts: Coe Glade's and Marion Claire's, Lotte Lehmann's and Jennie Tourel's.

But in 1932 it all came down with a crash, and was never really put together, although some very good people, among them Paul Longone and Fausta Cleva, tried. The forty-seven-story opera house on Wacker Drive that Samuel Insull had built and into which the company moved with great fanfare in 1929 was opened with the traditional *Aida*, but the singers missed

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

the old Auditorium. The new house actually seated a few hundred people less than the Auditorium, but was narrow and cavernous, and not comparable acoustically to the former.

The Auditorium was supposed to be torn down long ago, but it still stands there on Michigan Avenue, those tremendous walls of Louis Sullivan's as solid as ever. Roosevelt College is housed there now and it is unlikely that the building will ever be used for opera again. But until the wreckers finally bring down the last magnificent rock, Chicago will have not one but two opera houses.

And no opera.

Among the financiers who have made possible good music in Chicago — Harold McCormick, Samuel Insull, Charles G. Dawes, Stanley Field, Martin and Edward Ryerson, and many others—there is one name which, like Abou Ben Adhem's, should lead all the rest. It is that of Louis Eckstein, the moving spirit in the creation of what has been called "an American Bayreuth"—Ravinia.

At the turn of the century, Ravinia was a wild and picturesque tract of land, full of hills, forests, and ravines, lying between the great lake and the wide-stretching, lonely Skokie marshes to the west. It was about twenty-five miles north of Chicago and lay within the corporate limits of the town of Highland Park, a prosperous suburb. It was completely unimproved, left alone by farmers and real estate men alike. In the spring its green woods were fragrant with smoke-white shadblow, wild plum, crab and white hawthorne; the ground was covered with trillium, wake-robin, and mayapple; there were white pines on the lake bluff and red cedar and birch along the ravines. On the west the marshlands, all gold and crimson and brown in the fall, were splashed with blue gentians. In the forests there were whippoorwills and catbirds, bittern and woodcock, owls and wild geese.

Into this unspoiled paradise came a traction line, running

between Chicago and Milwaukee, to build an unsightly amusement park. This monstrosity had all the usual appurtenances of its kind—cafes, rides, wheels, a bandstand, a merry-go-round, a baseball field, and a theatre. It was called Ravinia Park. But it was just too far out, and the traction company found it unprofitable. When it was put up for sale, a group of wealthy North Shore citizens, anxious to put it out of business forever, bought it. They set up a corporation and elected Louis Eckstein president.

From 1912 to 1935, when he died, Louis Eckstein was president of the Ravinia Company, as the corporation was called. Eckstein, who had made a fortune in various fields — among them publishing, publicity, and the restaurant and drug business —made Ravinia his "yacht." What other rich men put into their hobbies, Eckstein put into the cause of good music in Ravinia. The amusement park eyesores were torn down; the building which had housed the merry-go-round was transformed into a restaurant; the bandstand was rebuilt, making it the back wall of a stage extending west with a pavilion open on three sides in front of it.

Here, at first, came the Chicago Symphony for part of the summer season, Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony, and occasionally the Minneapolis Symphony. Later there were dance exhibitions; Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis were featured one season. Still later there was Ben Greet's Shakespearean company.

Then, on a small scale at first, came summer opera to Ravinia. The number of days devoted to opera was gradually increased until, in the mid-twenties, Chicago was surprised to find that Mr. Eckstein had assembled at Ravinia an opera company that could make headlines around the world. Eckstein himself emerged as something of an impresario; he "discovered" Claudia Muzio and Edith Mason; Scotti sang "L'Oracolo" at Ravinia, the only time that colorful work was ever heard in Chicago;

Eckstein presented *Boris Godunoff* before the Auditorium would take a chance on it; *La Vida Breve*, with Lucretia Bori in the leading role, was a hit at Ravinia and was never heard in Chicago. In 1928, Eckstein put on Leroux' comic opera *Marouf*, "the last smile of French music before the war," and made a success of it, something which the Metropolitan in New York had failed to do.

1928 was a banner year for Ravinia Opera. The company that summer contained such stars as Elisabeth Rethberg, Yvonne Gall, Florence Macbeth, Edward Johnson, Giovanni Martinelli, Tito Schipa, Mario Chamlee, and Armand Tokatyan.

The setting at Ravinia was perfect for summer opera. In the forest glade before the music shed families could stretch a blanket and partake of a picnic lunch while awaiting the performance. In the shed itself 1800 people could be seated, but thousands more could lay on blankets or sit on camp stools under the stars, and the wooden structure of the pavilion (impossible in the city because of the fire laws) gave the music a mellow quality which could not be achieved in a building of fire-proof construction. At Ravinia the acoustics were so good that the music could be heard more than a mile away. The shed itself was hung with Japanese lanterns, and the total effect was one of rustic beauty unsurpassed anywhere in the country until the construction of Tanglewood in the Berkshires.

In 1932 the opera program was suspended at Ravinia, and for several summers after that a variety of musical events took place in the shed, among them a jazz concert by Benny Goodman and his band which drew a record crowd of 6,273, most of them arriving on bicycles or in jalopies. In 1936 a new non-profit corporation was set up called the Ravinia Festival Association, and after a few seasons of experimentation the Association settled down to a six-weeks season of symphonic music by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with a seventh and final week devoted to chamber music. This is a program that is now in

effect. Later a modern music shed was erected to replace the old bandstand pavilion that Louis Eckstein built, but many today perversely prefer the old wooden shed with its Japanese lanterns. But even with its modernistic decor, Ravinia still deserves the title of American Bayreuth, and it is more than ever a source of joy and inspiration to the thousands of Chicagoans for whom it is a summer shrine.

And today Grant Park, on the Chicago lake-front, is a poor-man's Ravinia. Here, four nights a week during the summer season, the Chicago Park Department presents symphonic music and concerts under the baton of Nicolai Malko. These concerts are free. And in spite of the fact that the Grant Park Orchestra has neither the budget nor the prestige of Ravinia, it frequently manages to outstrip the North Shore organization in its willingness to experiment. Some Chicago critics, after the 1952 season, were of the opinion that the hoi polloi in Grant Park had heard more interesting and adventurous music and been the beneficiaries of better programming than the upper crust that had paid good money to get into Ravinia.

One final note about Louis Eckstein. Long after his passing, he will continue to exercise a beneficent influence on the development of music in Chicago and in the country as a whole, for when his widow died in 1952 she left more than $4,000,000 to the Music School of Northwestern University in Evanston.

Chicago has another musical asset about which little is said but which is having a greater cultural impact on the Chicago public as a whole than any other one medium, with the possible exception of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. This is the FM radio station, WFMT.

WFMT is about as non-commercial as it is possible to be and still stay in business. It is the only station in the Midwest to present the British Broadcasting Company's highbrow Third Programme. Like Theodore Thomas and Frederick Stock, WFMT makes no compromise with poor taste. Operas, symphonies, con-

temporary music, literary comment, chamber music, and plays are presented in their entirety and the programming is not designed to make it "acceptable" or "popular." The owner of an FM radio in the Chicago area can tune in on WFMT almost anytime and be sure of a highly literate, carefully-chosen program with an absolute minimum of advertising. Anytime, that is, between the hours of 3:00 P.M. and midnight at present; soon the owners of the station hope to be able to increase the broadcast time to twelve hours a day. The station protects its listeners against the kind of boring repetition that one finds in so many radio stations with a rule that three months must pass before a recording can be repeated. This rule has been broken only once, at the impassioned insistence of listeners, to permit another playing of the BBC's Third Programme dramatization of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.*

Advertisers get short shrift at WFMT. Before they are accepted, it is carefully explained to them that the copy will have to be "low pressure" and that no attention-getting gimmicks will be tolerated. They are told that they can have no control over the programming, but will simply pay for the privilege of presenting a part of the program arranged by the station. Moreover, there is no guarantee as to just when the "commercial" will be made, as no symphony, opera, lecture, or play is ever cut short or interrupted for an ad, a station-break, or even a sign-off.

WFMT is the brain-child of a young Chicago couple named Bernard and Rita Jacobs. They first went on the air on December 13, 1951, when they were the entire staff, with Bernie as engineer, business manager, maintenance man, advertising director, and janitor, and Rita as announcer, secretary, program director, disk-twirler, and interior decorator (the studio was a mess). When the weather was bad, they even slept in the station. However, they began getting assistance from listeners, who came in and helped carry out trash, painted, licked enve-

lopes, drew posters, and even helped drum up a few sponsors. Today there are fifteen hardy sponsors and the staff has grown to six—two part-time announcers and two part-time engineers in addition to Bernie and Rita.

There are a number of other agencies beside WFMT which are engaged in the business of musical education in Chicago, and it would be nice if we had the time to take a long look at each of them. There is the Civic Music Association and its orchestra, which is a training school for the Chicago Symphony and which brings good music to neighborhoods and institutions where such music is not ordinarily heard. There is the excellent music program in the Chicago public schools. And there are the world famous music schools—Rudolph Ganz' Chicago Musical College, one of the leading institutions of its kind in the country; the Northwestern University School of Music, with its University Symphony Orchestra and its University Chamber Orchestra; the Cosmopolitan Music School; the American Conservatory of Music. In musical education, as in art, Chicago is pre-eminent in the Midwest.

Few world cities, in the course of a year, hear as much good music, as well played, as does this Midwestern metropolis which sensational journalism has identified solely with crime and corruption. For instance: in 1952-1953, the Chicago Symphony, under Kubelik and Associate Conductor George Schick, presented 28 Thursday evening and Friday afternoon pairs, 12 Tuesday afternoon concerts, 16 Saturday evening "pop" concerts, and 12 Young People's Concerts. Cantelli, Klemperer, and Bruno Walter were guest conductors. Among the distinguished soloists were Rudolf Firkusny, Heifetz, Myra Hess, Horowitz, Kapell, Serkin, and Elena Nikolaida. Works of especial interest to be presented were Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (Song of Earth) with Bruno Walter conducting, Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, and a concert version of *Parsifal*. The Allied Arts Corporation brought to Orchestra Hall Alexander

Brailowsky, Artur Rubinstein, Ervin Laszlo, and Florence Kirsch, and to the Opera House the Ballet Theatre, Mia Slavenska, Ana Maria's Spanish Ballet, Mata and Hari, and Jose Greco. In its "History and Enjoyment of Music" series at Orchestra Hall the same group presented Yehudi Menuhin, Dorothy Maynor, Cesare Siepi, the Vienna Choir Boys, Jan Peerce, Feruccio Tagliavini, Pia Tassinari, Nathan Milstein, Marian Anderson, Louis Sudler, and William Warfield, as well as the Denver, Boston, Cincinnati, and Danish State Symphony Orchestras. Northwestern had the Fine Arts Quartet in a series of six chamber music concerts, and Mary Wickersham's Mid-West Music Foundation offered a series of eight "Twilight Concerts" at Orchestra Hall with distinguished visiting artists, a "Piano and Concert Series" on Tuesday evenings, and the only Chicago appearance of the Quartetto Italiano.

Add all this to Ravinia and Grant Park and WFMT, and you have a feast of great music which would have brought joy to the hearts of Julius Dhyrenfurth and Hans Balatka and Theodore Thomas. Contemplating it, one wonders if that old political windbag who orated at the opening of the Auditorium to the effect that Chicago would become the Athens of America and undertake the musical education of the whole country might not have had something, after all.

Now if only another Louis Eckstein would rise up, to make opera his "yacht," and restore Chicago and its two opera houses to its rightful place in the operatic world, the place that Campinini and Rosa Raisa and Mary Garden won for it, everything would be well in the best of all possible worlds.

Chicago, heaven help it, would even settle for another Sam Insull!

LADIES OF THE CITY . . . *an ancient and more or less honorable profession.*—RUDYARD KIPLING.

Chapter VI

From Minna to Maximum

IN THE SPRING of 1903 the Honorable Carter Harrison II, who had just been elected to another term as mayor of the City of Chicago, was discussing the recent campaign with two of his trusted lieutenants. "I wonder," he said modestly, "just why the people chose me again?"

According to Herman Kogan, the big, red-faced man in the green suit and purple vest rose to the occasion as usual. "Mister Maar," he brayed, "you won because of the well-known honesty which has caricatured your every administration!"[1]

This master of malaprop was the "poet lariat" and senior alderman of Chicago's First Ward, the Hon. John Coughlin, better known as "The Bath" because he had once been a masseur in a bathhouse. His companion, the junior alderman, was a small man with soft, tiny hands and an expression of continual grief. His name was Michael Kenna, generally known as "Hinky-Dink" or "The Little Fellow." He was the brains of the combination, a boodler par excellence, and possibly one of the shrewdest men ever to hold public office.

This precious pair, the buffoon and the boodler, were the overlords of the most reckless pleasure-ground in North America, the old South Side levee. This most crimson of all red-light districts occupied an area in the southern part of the First Ward that included some five solid blocks north of 22nd Street

1. See Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Lords of the Levee,* the story of Hinky-Dink Kenna and Bath-House John Coughlin.

between Clark and Wabash. Compared with it, San Francisco's Barbary Coast would have been a suitable location for a W. C. T. U. convention. Such was its fame that its location in Chicago was popularly credited with the initiation of fast train service between New York and the Mid-West.

Very well. But what is a chapter on the old levee doing in a book such as this? What cultural significance did the segregated district, or districts, have?

In a way, none. None, that is, to compare with the influence of New Orleans' Storyville on the development of jazz. But in another way, a good deal. No other tenderloins in the world, save possibly those of New Orleans and Paris, have intrigued authors as have the succession of red-light areas, from the old "Sands" that Long John Wentworth washed into the lake, to North Clark Street, to South Clark Street, and finally to 22nd Street, that decorated the Chicago scene. These purlieus, for better or for worse, were of the essence of the city from its earliest days, part and parcel of a brash, brawling, bawdy city that was chronologically and geographically close to the frontier and glad of it. They were an integral part of Chicago's self-conscious bigness; no other city in the world could boast of so much vice, such elaborate bagnios, such colorful madames, such a phalanx of demi-mondes. Successful vice was as much a part of the Chicago story as successful meat-packing or successful railroading or successful farm machinery manufacturing. It was this open, unblushing bawdiness, so different from the furtive, back-alley whoring of the East, that captured the imagination of a whole series of writers from Edna Ferber (who got a lot of North Clark Street into "Show-Boat"), Dreiser, and Ben Hecht down through Herman Kogan, Herbert Asbury, Charles Washburn, Nelson Algren, and Willard Motley. It can almost be said that the Chicago house of ill fame, *circa* 1900, is the classic prototype of the bagnio in American art, letters, and drama.

All over the world and throughout history, prostitution and its artifacts have been part and parcel of *la vie bohéme*. The artist, the writer, the musician, the actor and the prostitute all share a common rootlessness; they live on the fringe of society. Either by preference or necessity, they have rejected the bourgeois world and its accepted modes of living. Society, in turn, looks down on them (or they think it does, which amounts to the same thing). Economic necessity, rootlessness, and the urge to unconventionality throw the prostitute and the young worker in the arts together; in later years this early association materializes in that stock literary and dramatic character the "honest prostitute," the "demi-mondaine-with-a-heart-of-gold," the bluff "madame" who is also mother-confessor. The young writer or artist finds the unconventionality, the sexual freedom, the camaraderie of bohemia creatively fruitful, and so "la vie bohéme" figures in art and literature out of proportion to its actual influence on society as a whole.

There are some world cities that are culturally incomprehensible unless one understands the netherworlds, the "city below the city" of which Nelson Algren writes. Paris is such a city. So is Shanghai (or was until the Reds got it). So is New Orleans. And so, more than any of these, is Chicago. In these places (unlike Dublin or Madrid or Boston or Denver) the writer or artist must know the underworld before he can understand the upper-world. Take Montmartre out of Paris or the Vieux Carre out of New Orleans and you throw away the key that unlocks the city's heart. Similarly, if you know nothing of "The Sands," "Little Cheyenne," North Clark Street, or the Twenty-second street tenderloin of recent memory, you cannot know Chicago. In giving flavor to Chicago, the Armours, Swifts and Ryersons must take a back seat to the Kennas, Colosimos, Capones, and Everleighs. This is nothing to be proud of, but it is a fact that must be taken into account.

And so, because it was the backdrop for so much of the

writing about Chicago, and because it was as much a part of lusty hog-butcher Chicago as the stock-yards or the skyscrapers or the steel mills or the Art Institute, let us look for a moment at the biggest of the levees and some of its Fallen Angels.

Chicago had always been a great town for trollops. After the fire of 1871, the red-light district was concentrated around Clark and Van Buren, running south as far as Polk Street. Here were the establishments that are still remembered by the gaffers who came to the Columbian Exposition — Carrie Watson's plushy house at 441 South Clark, Frankie Wright's "Library," Lizzie Allen's, and Vina Field's. This latter was a Negro house catering to white men and featuring light-skinned girls, and was run as rigidly as a nunnery. There were a lot of others, plus the usual panel houses (secret panels let thieves go through the man's clothes while he was otherwise occupied), goosing slums, cribs, saloons, theatres, and opium joints. The area was dubbed "Little Cheyenne," a designation that so irritated the citizens of Cheyenne, Wyoming that they began calling their red-light district "Little Chicago."

Near the corner of Clark and Van Buren was Kenna's "Workingman's Exchange," the capitol of the tenderloin, and a saloon where a 5¢ beer (in a schooner so big it couldn't be lifted with one hand) permitted access to a gargantuan free lunch. Across Clark Street the Little Fellow had another saloon for the carriage trade, and behind the bar hung the wry Hink's favorite motto: "In Vino Veritas." "It means," he would explain, "that when you get a snoot-full you'll tell your right name." When Prohibition came in, the Hink donated one of his enormous beer schooners to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union for its museum in Evanston, and the schooner was formally presented, along with a pretty little poem by poet-lariat Coughlin, to the president of the WCTU.

In 1897 street car tracks were laid on Clark Street and Carter Harrison ("Our Carter" to the Cook County Democracy) told

the Little Cheyenne madames that they would have to abandon the area. It wouldn't do, Our Carter said, for the simple burghers taking the Clark Street cars to and from work to be subjected to the anything-but-subtle blandishments of the wayward daughters. It might take their minds off their jobs.

Now a few of the lower-type bagnios had drifted southward before this and located around 22nd and Dearborn, down around the carbarns. So when Our Carter told the "landladies" to get their "stock" off Clark Street, most of them simply boarded the blankety-blank street cars, rode down to 22nd Street, and quickly filled in the blocks between Clark and Wabash and 16th and 22nd. In no time at all this new tenderloin, far exceeding any other red-light district in the city's history in extent, was booming with a brazenness that made Little Cheyenne look like a churchyard. When the madames moved, the City Fathers, recognizing that the political power of the Little Fellow and the Bath depended on control of the demimonde, obligingly moved the boundaries of the First Ward with them.

By 1900 the 22nd Street levee had a total population of around 5000, and included by actual count 119 houses of ill fame staffed by 686 women. Twelve years later the number of prostitutes had risen to between four and five thousand. The Vice Commission set up in 1910 estimated that 27,375,000 separate acts of prostitution were committed on the levee each year, that $15,000,000 was realized from rents and the sale of liquor, and that 7,000,000 bottles of beer were consumed by levee denizens. The average age of the girls was 23 1/2, according to the Commission, and the average professional life of each girl was five years.

And all of this, "From Minna to Maximum," as the Bath used to say (Minna was the dominant Everleigh sister) was organized to elect mayors and to insure comfort and security for The Hink and The Bath in their old age. "Take the little stuff

and leave the big stuff alone," a United States senator had once advised The Bath, and the advice had been heeded. The First Ward aldermen took plenty, but always the small stuff, and they always left some for the other guy. And they were never stingy with what they took. The Little Fellow once fired a bartender for barring approach to the free lunch to a bum who didn't have the price of a schooner.

The chain of command on the levee ran something like this: the police captain at the 22nd Street Station took his orders from the ward leader, Ike Bloom. Ike's picture was prominently displayed on the wall behind the captain's desk. Ike ran a dive called Freiburg's, a combined saloon, dance hall, and bagnio. Second in command to Ike was Big Jim Colosimo, an Italian headwaiter type who had a restaurant at 22nd and Wabash and a pair of dollar houses, the Victoria and the Saratoga. Jim had been a street-cleaner and The Hink had picked him up out of the gutter and made him a precinct captain in charge of getting out the Italian vote. On the side Jim was building up the organization that later became the Capone Syndicate. He departed this life one May afternoon in 1920 when, as he was going over the evening menu with his chef, a stranger plugged him right between the antipasto and the lasagna. Almost everybody in Chicago went to his funeral.

Jim was collector and strong-arm man for Ike and Ike took the swag to Kenna, who was much too sensitive to deal with levee madames in person. Protection scales were very modest, in keeping with the senator's advice to "leave the big stuff alone." Massage parlors and assignation joints were insured against police interference for a modest $25 per week each. The larger places paid from $50 to $100, plus an extra $25 if drinks were sold. $50 a month was the price for the privilege of staying open after legal closing hours, and $15 a month bought the right to sell liquor without a license. Gambling houses were assessed

$25 per table per week. The total from all this was about $15,000,000 per year.

Minna Everleigh, pulling the rug out from under the aldermen in a letter to the State's Attorney's office after the Everleigh Club was closed, declared that all orders relative to protection on the levee came from Kenna and Coughlin; that everybody had to insure with a company controlled by Coughlin; that liquor had to be bought from Freiburg's, in which Coughlin had a half interest; and that there were four favored grocery stores to which levee madames had to limit themselves.

By day the levee was a drab place. Only the rattle of the street cars and the rumble of vans and horses' hooves on the cobblestones disturbed the slumbers of the inmates of the decorous two and three-story brick and brownstone houses and the alley shacks in back of them. But after dark the district came alive; the red glass gleamed in the transoms, the windows were thrown open if the weather was warm enough, and the strains of piano and orchestra music floated down the street. The air was gently troubled by the fumes of alcohol and perfume, and on the best corners the Salvation Army set up its big bass drums and boomed hymns at the strumpets, imploring them to leave their lives of sin and "come home." Since "coming home" meant leaving $25 to $100 a week incomes for $5 and $6 a week jobs in shirt factories and department stores, not many of the fallen responded. Along the sidewalks pimps extolled the accomplishments of their properties or tried to lure the unwary to stag shows and "circuses." On the north side of 22nd Street dance orchestras banged away in Freiburg's and Buxbaum's, and a continual stream of couples went back and forth between the palaces of terpsichore and the upper floors of the Marlborough House, a "hotel" (the word is used loosely) at 22nd and State where rooms were available at $5 a visit and were rented out a dozen times a night. After midnight the

carriage trade began to come in, and the madames sent out beaters to flush out the big spenders and entice them away from wherever they were to the madame's own superior establishment. Since those who had the big spenders took a dim view of attempts to lure them elsewhere, the presence of a well-heeled lush in the area always gave rise to numerous fights.

There was something for every taste on the levee, from the 25¢ cribs of Bed-Bug Row to the $200 facilities available at the Everleigh Club for the customer who wanted to stay overnight. If you didn't care to sample the wares you could just look; there were stag shows and circuses with admission fees of from $5 to $50. The circuses at Black May's were alleged to be the most bestial on the levee; May featured light-skinned colored girls and boasted that no one could think up an act of degeneracy that they would not perform. At the House of All Nations there were girls in a variety of colors and also separate $2 and $5 entrances. The same girls, however, worked both sides. The story is told of a Polish girl, engaged to a church janitor who didn't know she was a prostitute, who switched from the $5 to $2 side when the $5 business was slow. The first customer to show up on the cheaper side was her fiance. The couple committed suicide in the church basement and left a sad little note saying "we found out about each other's sin before it was too late." The levee had a good cry over this.

Some of the madames were quite enterprising. Frankie Wright, who had moved her "Library" down from Little Cheyenne, offered her customers books to read while they made up their minds. The "Why Not," following the example of an earlier house of the same name, had the coy query "Why Not?" painted in large black letters on all its window-shades. French Emma Duval inaugurated the all-mirror room and insured her source of supply by operating a stockade in Blue Island known as "The Retreat," where women were kept to await buyers. The largest levee joint, the California, was rigged

for mass production, with a constant parade of nearly-naked girls shuffling past the prospective customers and the madame shouting "Pick a baby, boys! Don't get stuck to your seats!" The price was $1, but a half would do. The Sappho, run by one Aimee Leslie, was at 2129 Dearborn and got the rejects from the Everleigh Club next door; most of them never knew the difference.

The business of supplying girls to the levee was handled chiefly by Big Jim Colosimo's vice organization, which had connections with the international white slave ring. Outside of Jim's outfit, one of the popular sources of "stock" was an organization run by Russian Jews which featured girls of that race (considered great prizes on the levee). This lovable group had its headquarters in the Dewey Hotel on Washington Boulevard. Its stockades and breaking-in rooms (virgins were broken to "the life" by professional rapists) were on the top floor and the business offices on the floor below; once a week the directors would meet to discuss the stock on hand, the state of the market, etc., and arrange for incoming shipments. When large stocks were accumulated they would hold an auction, and the girls, stripped to the buff, would be knocked down to the highest bidder. Most stock brought about $200 a head.

The levee was organized to the hilt. The pimps had their own union, called "The Cadet's Protective Association," and the madames met weekly in a sort of a devil's Ladies' Aid called "The Friendly Friends." This group aped the manners of the upper world, drinking tea, knitting, and gossiping. Most of the madames had common-law husbands or lovers who were known as their "solid men"; sometimes these "solid men" managed the business affairs of the houses, sometimes they pimped, sometimes they ran saloons, and sometimes they just sat around and read the papers.

One of the most successful "solid men" on the levee was a character named Christopher Columbus Crabb. He had been

the consort of Carrie Watson up on the Clark Street levee, and when she died he fell heir to most of her fortune. He then associated himself with another successful madame by the name of Lizzie Allen, and when she died he picked up another bag of moolah, including the twin buildings at 2131-2133 Dearborn Street that were later leased to the Everleigh Club. "An imposing-looking rooster," Carter Harrison said of him, and so he must have been, because when he died in 1935, full of years and honors, he was a member of the socially elite Chicago Athletic Club. In those days the successful whoremonger was as acceptable to Chicago society as the successful meat-packer or the successful utilities tycoon.

The great social event of the year on the levee was the annual First Ward Ball, popularly known as The Derby. This monstrous debauch was the successor to a benefit which had been presented for years on the Clark Street levee for Lame Jimmy, the piano-player in Carrie Watson's establishment. At one of Lame Jimmy's benefits a policeman had been killed and, while that meant the end of this philanthropic orgy, the fertile minds of Aldermen Kenna and Coughlin saw possibilities in the "benefit" idea. They took over the event, moved it to the Coliseum, and dubbed it the First Ward Ball. It was for nobody's benefit but Coughlin's and Kenna's, and for them it did all right. Up to $70,000 per ball was realized through the sale of tickets to everybody on the levee, plus the income from various concessions. Attendance was a must. The madames bought booths which they and their girls decorated, and champagne salesmen doing business or hoping to do business on the levee were given $1500 worth of bubble-juice to give away at the affair.

It was a lethal combination—free hootch, and every whore in town. At the stroke of midnight the Grand March began, led by the Little Fellow or The Bath with an Everleigh sister on each arm and the drunken mob howling and cavorting in their wake. Will Irwin, writing about it in *Colliers*, described

it as "5000 drunks doing everything that drunks do," and observed that the floor was so crowded that even those who were dead drunk had to stand upright. The Bath reserved his most exotic haberdashery for the occasion, appearing in green, lavender, and heliotrope suits and wearing pink gloves. Many of the City Council attended, and people came from as far as Detroit and St. Louis to ogle the spectacle. The Gold Coast haute-monde sneaked in anonymously, looking apprehensively over their shoulders to see if they were recognized. Reformers tried in vain to stop the obscene soirée. The *Tribune* finally accomplished it by threatening to print the names of everybody who showed up.

The most prominent landladies on the levee, cordially hated by the other madames because they high-hatted "The Friendly Friends" and had no "solid men" of their own, were the Everleigh sisters, Minna and Ada. The Everleigh Club was far and away the classiest seraglio in the entire country.

The attractive sisters were in their early twenties in 1900, when the club opened its doors for the first time. They were the daughters of a prominent Kentucky lawyer, and they came to Chicago via Omaha after brief and unhappy marriages. They had traveled with a road-show for awhile after their divorces, and had put together enough money to enable them to open a rooming house in Omaha in 1898, the year of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition there. They soon discovered that many of their fellow rooming-house operators were running houses of quite another sort on the side, and, always with an eye to a solid buck, it didn't take them long to follow suit.

With the closing of the Exposition, Omaha became just another whistle-stop and the sisters looked around for a wide-open town where they could ply their new profession with a minimum of interference. They sounded out friends in Washington, and were advised to try Chicago. In Chicago, the sisters decided, they would open a seraglio that would make any

other house in the country look as plain as your Aunt Hattie's hen-coop. They leased the properties at 2131-2133 Dearborn Street from Christopher Columbus Crabb and were off to the races.

On the first floor of the Club was a music room, a library, an art gallery, a grand ball room, a dining room, and a buffet lunch. Twenty-five cooks and maids were employed, and three orchestras played constantly from 9 P.M. until morning. There were twelve sound-proof parlors where private parties might retire, called the Gold, Moorish, Silver, Copper, Red, Rose, Green, Blue, Oriental, Chinese, Egyptian and Japanese Rooms. Every room had a $650 gold spittoon and a fountain which squirted jets of perfume into the air as regularly as Old Faithful. When Minna and Ida retired twelve years later, it was estimated that there were $150,000 worth of rugs, paintings, and *objets d'art* in the Club, plus enough furniture to equip a small hotel. This latter included from forty to fifty brass beds inlaid with marble and fitted with specially-built mattresses and springs. There was a $15,000 gold piano in the Gold Room, now the property of a New York press agent, who bought it at auction after Minna Everleigh died in 1949.

From the first, reporters were pampered by the Everleigh Club. They could come in anytime they wanted to, partake of food and drink, receive messages, and even sample the specialty of the house if they wished. For twelve years the Everleigh Club was a *sub rosa* Chicago press club, and any story that broke after midnight could usually be covered by the night editor's calling Calumet 412. None of the gentlemen of the Fourth Estate would ever admit to having availed themselves of all the privileges of the Club, but, as the old joke says, it was there for them.

Over a bowl of chop suey on a drab November day in 1951, an elderly reporter-turned-publicity man reminisced to this writer about the Club:

"The first thing that struck your eye when you went in was that it was so damned quiet. A colored maid answered the door and took your coat and hat. There might be a gentleman and an attractive, well-dressed girl reading in the library or looking at pictures in the art gallery, and a couple of prosperous-looking men having dinner in the dining room. If you didn't know you were in a House of Ill Fame you might have confused the joint with a young ladies seminary. There were no pimps about, and no parades of girls. You could hear the faint sound of an orchestra playing somewhere, and pretty soon Minna or Ada would show up, and over a glass of champagne, would ascertain your wishes. After a decent interval she would excuse herself and come back with a girl, always a stunner. She did the picking —not you. Then, after a suitable introduction (everything was very proper) you were on your own. You didn't have to go to bed with the girl. You could ask her to dinner, have a game of casino, look at pictures, play the piano, or just talk. You could stay all night if you liked, and when you got up your clothes were all pressed for you and your shoes shined. You paid when you left, and nothing was said about money until then. Your check was good, and it would come back discreetly endorsed 'Utopia Novelty Company.' You could spend as much or as little as you liked, but if you spent less than $50 you would have a hard time getting into the Club again. Of course"—he said, as they always did—"I never went upstairs. I was strictly a first-floor man."

They were all strictly first floor men to hear them tell it.

Once you got above the first floor the jinks were pretty high at 2131-2133. There was an all-mirror room, and one parlor with a mirror in the canopy over the bed. In the Chinese Room there was a big brass bowl and a supply of fire-crackers which the guests might shoot off, the noise of the fire-crackers competing with that of the champagne corks. Each night there was a beard contest, with the girls vying for the customer with the

longest beard. The girls kept rulers in their rooms for the purpose of measuring the beards, and stories that the rulers were for other measurements are without foundation. Each girl put 50¢ per night into a kitty which became the property of the girl who entertained the man with the longest beard. As the *fille de joie* bore her bearded Adonis triumphantly aloft, she would call out slyly to the others: "He's my jockey"—meaning "I think he's going to win for me."

Minna Everleigh had an excellent sense of humor. She liked to tell about the painter who was very conscious of the fact that he was working in a House of Ill Fame. The sisters were having some redecorating done, and a customer in the Gold Room had inadvertently put his hand on the paint before it was dry, affecting a sizeable smear. After the painter had worked around the place for awhile, Minna decided to have him touch up the Gold Room.

"Come upstairs," she said, "and I'll show you where a man put his hand last night."

"If it's all the same to you, ma'am, I'd rather have a glass of beer," replied the honest artisan.

One of the best-remembered revels to take place in the Everleigh Club was the celebration in honor of Prince Henry of Prussia, who came to the Midwest in March, 1902, ostensibly to visit the German community in Milwaukee. The sisters went all out for the royal visitor, putting on a banquet and show that featured girls in fawn-skins celebrating the rites of Dionysius-Zagreus, tearing at a paper bull with their teeth and devouring hunks of raw meat. During the uproar a coryphee lost her slipper and a man promptly filled it with champagne and drank from it, thus initiating a custom that was to symbolize hell-raising the world over.

Another memorable night was the Thanksgiving eve that three *Daily News* staffers brought three glassy-eyed, long-dead turkeys to the Club. The birds were the annual gift of the pious

Victor Lawson, owner of the paper, who gave everybody a turkey with a little "blessing" card tied about its skinny neck. The staffers, at least the single ones, disliked the turkeys, preferring gifts of cash. On this particular night, three of them rebelled. They knew Lawson hated vice and drinking, so, holding their hands over their mouths to conceal the fumes of rum in case they encountered the boss in the elevator, they tucked the birds under their arms and headed for the Everleigh Club. They had a wild time there, swinging the long, clammy necks of the gobblers and otherwise cutting up until the small hours of the morning. Then they put the "blessing" cards in an envelope and mailed them to Lawson, knowing that the 22nd Street Post Office cancellation mark would be a dead give-away as to where they had been.

In the cold light of Friday morning, the joke didn't seem quite so funny. Lawson called in Ben Atwill, the leader of the escapade. "Well, Atwill!" thundered Lawson, "is it the Everleigh Club or the *Daily News*?" "Neither, Mr. Lawson," replied Atwill. "It's the *Journal*." Knowing the jig was up, he had phoned the rival paper that morning and been promised a job.

The Everleigh sisters really had too much class for the Levee. They even had too much class for the police. It was a Chicago Chief of Police, no less, who replied to the sisters' request for better policing of the area: "Listen, the sooner you get it into your pretty heads that it takes a little killing and a little stealing to make a Levee, you'll do less worrying."

A little killing there was, too, and some of it the jealous Levee tried to pin on the sisters. One night in January, 1910, Nathaniel Ford Moore, the 26-year-old son of the president of the Rock Island Railroad, was found dead in bed at Vic Shaw's place. He had previously visited the Everleigh Club but, since he was already drunk, had been refused wine and had left in a huff. One of the girls left with him. Later the girl, hysterical, phoned Minna from Vic Shaw's, saying that Moore was dead

and that Vic Shaw and her "cadets" were plotting to put the body in the Everleigh Club furnace. Minna promptly invaded Vic Shaw's and forced Vic to admit that the young man had died in bed at her place. The official verdict was "heart trouble" but the scuttlebutt was that a lethal dose of morphine had been put in his wine.

All this, of course, couldn't go on forever. The handwriting had been on the wall as early as October 1909 when Gypsy Smith, the English evangelist, had led a parade of 20,000 righteous citizens through the streets of the South Side Sodom, holding prayer meetings and singing "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" After the hosts of Zion had departed the Levee enjoyed its biggest night in years, many of Gypsy's followers apparently staying to make a closer study of the sins of the flesh. But public sentiment was rising against officially sanctioned vice.

Oddly enough the best-run, least vicious house on the whole Levee was the first to go. Our Carter was a bon vivant and a tolerant man, but when the Everleigh Club published a brochure advertising its advantages, he thought maybe the sisters were going too far. When a drunken prostitute grabbed hizzoner by the coattail and tried to pull him up the stairs of a flea-bag on Clark Street, he was angry. But when he chanced to see Vic Shaw, in an electric brougham that was lit up like a Christmas tree, tooling down sacrosanct Michigan Avenue one night, he blew his top. If the Levee could not refrain from advertising itself all over town it would have to go!

The Levee did advertise, in a way. The madames would drive into the Loop to transact business, wearing extremely low-cut gowns and pounds of diamonds; their equipages would be banked with flowers and if it was at all dusky the lights would be turned on full blaze. In the back seat, wearing the most *décolleté* of gowns, shining with gems, and painted to a fare-thee-well, would be the youngest, fairest flower of the *maison*.

Nobody could mistake the outfit for anything but what it was, and that was the precise intention.

On October 24, 1911, Our Carter ordered the Everleigh Club closed. There was a little politics involved—the Everleigh sisters were not members in good standing of "The Trust" that paid tribute to The Hink and The Bath via Ike Bloom. Ike did suggest that $20,000 might deflect some of the heat and permit the Club to stay open, but the sisters turned him down. Minna took the closing cheerfully. "You get everything in a lifetime," she said. "We'll go down with a good drink under our belts."

Down they went and off to New York to live quietly on West 71st Street for almost forty years.

It was a full year later that the Levee as a whole felt the hot breath of reform on its dirty neck. By then a Vice Commission had reported and a new State's Attorney raided the Levee. For a solid week in the fall of 1912 the Levee was a nightly maelstrom of police, hoodlums, whores, madames, detectives, reformers, sightseers, and Salvation Army lads and lassies with their bass drums. The houses, never locked, were open to the public after their occupants were hauled off in the paddy wagon, and their liquor stores quickly entered the public domain. A new police captain was put in charge of the 22nd Street station; the first thing he did was to throw out Ike Bloom's picture. The second thing he threw out was Ike, who called to "fix" things. No fix, said the new captain. "Balls!" cried Ike. When he picked himself up out on the sidewalk he knew it was all over.

The Little Fellow kept trying. As each saloon or seraglio was shuttered he would appeal to Our Carter: "You've got him all wrong, Mr. Mayor. He's one of our best captains. I can always count on him—he's a good, conscientious s.o.b. even if he does run a whorehouse!"

No use. Our Carter had the bit in his teeth, and besides he was thinking of running for governor. Civilization, or a reason-

able facsimile thereof, had finally caught up with Chicago. Down went the sinful old Levee.

Is any of it left today?

"Yes and no," said the old reporter, polishing off the last mouthful of fried rice. "That is, it's scattered. Go out to Calumet City, in the County. Or up on the Near North Side, between Ohio Street and Chicago Avenue. Who's running it? The same outfit, really, that ran the old Levee. The Colosimo 'trust' that Capone and Johnny Torrio took over. Call it the 'Mafia,' if you like the word—Kefauver does. It runs everything."

But this writer had been to Calumet City and lived on the Near North Side, and so, being of an historical bent, went instead down to the old Levee. Vic Shaw's house on Dearborn is a vacant lot now, full of weeds and tin cans. Colosimo's has been closed for a long time, and there is a For Sale sign on the building. Where the Everleigh Club stood there is an auto junkyard.

But next door at 2129 Dearborn, Aimee Leslie's "Sappho" is still there. Negro families occupy its three floors. Through the windows one sees religious lithographs on the walls and votive candles on home-made altars. One wonders what they would say, these pious dark folk, if someone told them they were living in one of the most notorious old brothels in Chicago.

A little way up the forlorn street the building that once housed Emma Duval and her ingenious mirrors is still standing. It looks unoccupied; its windows are broken; its front door flaps on a broken hinge.

But from its dingy basement there is a smell of wood-smoke and a soft feminine voice floats through the late-afternoon gloom: "Hey, man, you lookin' foh a good time?"

The French have a saying: the more it changes, the more it is the same thing.

WHEN I CALLED *on him in his first studio, a portion of one wall was covered with things which seemed to me an unappeasable desire for sunlight, colour, romance. Where were such walls in Chicago, such days, such roses, such sunlight? Not in Chicago, surely. Yet here they were put forth as obvious and customary things of the city; its Springs, Summers, Autumns. Not so, I said. They grew out of his own dreams and his own needs.*— THEODORE DREISER, *on Jerome Blum.*

Chapter VII

The Artist in Porkopolis

AT THE LOWER end of Rush Street, where the shadow of the Wrigley Building falls across the north bank of the Chicago River, there is an unusual restaurant called Riccardo's. Its proprietor is an unusual man, also called Riccardo—Richard Riccardo, or, as the artists of Chicago know him, simply "Ric."

Ric is an artist himself, and a good one. But he is much more than that. He is a chef whose lasagna with mushrooms lies on the taste buds with the delicate yet exhilarating flavor of an oregano-scented kiss, whose minestrone is as intricate, mysterious, and delightful as an affair with a king's mistress. He is a patron who has encouraged into fame (or reasonable facsimile thereof) a score of young strugglers in music and the arts, ranging from Vivian Della Chiesa to the fine etcher and craftsman, John Foote. He is a publicity-wise businessman who advertises his restaurant by such sure-fire means as his annual dinghy race, which he calls the Frostbite Regatta. (The little boats race from the locks on the lake to Rush Street, and the

losers have to lug their craft on their backs up to the restaurant, where they are refreshed with hot wine.) And finally Ric is a genial host in the Parisian manner; the restaurant has a sidewalk cafe on Rush Street where the customer may sit all day, basking in the sun and sipping an aperitif, without being bothered by importunate waiters. Ric wanted a place like La Coupole on Montparnasse, and he's got it. Riccardo's is the undisputed headquarters of Chicago's Left Bank.

Riccardo's is the only restaurant of its kind in the country, and Ric himself is the only one of his kind in the world. Some New Yorkers wanted him to come to New York and set up another Riccardo's there, but he turned them down. Instead, he established that tiny, atmospheric and gustatorial delight at the corner of Wabash and Ohio called the Pizzeria Uno, where only pizza is served, and where you can scribble your initials or any appropriate sentiment on the walls if you so desire. The cheese, anchovy, and sausage pizza pie here is an experience comparable only to inheriting a fortune in tax-free bonds.

What do you mean, talking about food when you're supposed to be talking about art? *Eh bien, ma petite*, in Chicago, you find art where you find food, because—alas—there aren't any great galleries in town. The people who make a business of exhibiting and selling works of art discovered some time ago that, while Chicagoans love art and buy a lot of it, they go to New York to do it. For some unfathomable reason, they'd rather make a trip to New York, browse around 57th Street, buy something, and then pay an exorbitant price to have it crated up and shipped to Evanston, Winnetka, or Glencoe than to buy it on Michigan Avenue. So the big galleries have withdrawn from Chicago, leaving the field to the restaurants and to a dozen or so struggling little galleries which have to eke out an existence by selling postcards and curios on the side.

It was back in 1935 that Ric, a graduate from the WPA Art Project, decided to open a bistro. He scraped together a sum

that was barely enough to get the door unlocked, and he hung the walls with his own paintings. The customers liked the paintings, and even bought a few. Ric then began to display one canvas every month by a different artist, and finally started a monthly exhibition. A lot of this work sold, and the restaurant became a hangout for Chicago's artists. Ric enlarged the bar, and engaged six painters who had been on the WPA Art Project with him to execute a series of seven murals depicting the Seven Lively Arts. The artists, all famous now, were Aaron Bohrod, the Albright twins, Rudolph Weisenborn, William Schwartz, Vincent D'Agostino, and Ric himself. These murals are the pride of the restaurant, and are insured for $100,000.

Today, Ric exhibits the work of painters from all over the country in his monthly exhibitions, as well as the work of business men who paint as a hobby, and students in the public school art classes. Artists still gather at the restaurant. So do newspapermen, photographers, and illustrators, who have their own room and their own club called The Padded Cell. They meet every day for lunch, and transact a good deal of their business around the table. The Padded Cell issues cards to its members, but anyone paying dues is automatically ousted. William Schwartz, the artist and Ric's good friend, has his studio upstairs over the restaurant. The American Federation of Radio Artists has its offices there, and Ric's own apartment is also on the second floor. This means that in addition to being a restaurant, club, and exhibition gallery, Riccardo's is also an atelier. And Ric has plans to expand the atelier so that artists visiting Chicago may have working space.

Another place in Chicago where good food and good art go hand in hand is the Club St. Elmo, on North State Street. Here St. Elmo Linton cooks his steaks and chops over what he calls "St. Elmo's Fire," and provides his customers with such unusual appetizers as fried agave worms, rattlesnake meat, white fish livers, and rooster combs imported from France. Adjoining his

dining room Linton has a lounge with an oval bar in which he exhibits paintings, changing the display each month. More than 30 Chicago artists have exhibited at St. Elmo's, many of them young students at the Art Institute who gave their first one-man shows at the club.

Long before the restaurants went into the art business there were some pretty interesting ateliers in Chicago. The Fine Arts Building, with its many studios occupied by artists, etchers, bookmen, writers, and musicians was the center of artistic endeavor in town for years, with the old Athenaeum a close second. Ralph Clarkson, the New Englander who had studied at the Boston Museum under Grudeman and Crowninshield and then had come to Chicago to make a name for himself as America's finest portrait-painter, had a large studio on the tenth floor of the Fine Arts in which much of Chicago's art history was written. The Cliff-Dwellers was founded there, and so was its ladies auxiliary, the Cordon. The Municipal Art League was conceived there. And for years, from the turn of the century on, Clarkson's studio was the locale of "The Little Room."

The Little Room was a Friday afternoon affair which grew out of the habit of the denizens of the Fine Arts Building and their friends of gathering in Ralph Clarkson's studio for tea and conversation after the afternoon concert of the Theodore Thomas orchestra in the Auditorium, which was next door to the Fine Arts. Among the "Little Roomers" were Henry B. Fuller, the writer, A. B. and I. K. Pond, the architects, Hamlin Garland, Floyd Dell, Emerson Hough, Keith Preston, Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Lorado Taft, Clarkson himself, and numerous other eminences in the cultural life of Chicago. Visiting luminaries in art and the theatre were feted at The Little Room, Isadora Duncan once waltzing ecstatically with the 80-year-old I. K. Pond and rewarding him for his expert terpsichore with a resounding kiss, after which the octogenarian architectural

genius did a series of acrobatic back-flips which amazed everybody.

Another atelier of note was the camp on the Rock River at Oregon, Illinois, which was dubbed The Eagle's Nest, and which has been called "the Barbizon of Chicago artists." What Provincetown was to Massachusetts and Laguna Beach to Southern California, Oregon and its "Eagle's Nest" was to Chicago artists in the early years of the century. It was a tiny colony in a setting of unsurpassed loveliness, only thirteen acres in all, watered by the picturesque "Sinnissippi" of the Indians, and crowned by Lorado Taft's majestic statue of a blanket-wrapped, brooding Indian chief, "Black Hawk." The cottages, occupied by the Tafts, Ralph Clarkson, Oliver Dennett Grover (an artist and teacher at the Art Institute), the sculptress Nellie Walker, Charles Francis Browne, and others lined the edge of the river bluffs and overlooked a panorama of forests, valleys, and farms. The whole scene was dominated by the 60-foot-high statue of Black Hawk, cast in concrete by Taft and an indomitable apprentice named Presuhn, who worked most of one winter in 20-below-zero temperatures to prove the feasibility of casting such an enormous work in concrete.

In those years and in that place it was heaven to be young and an artist. Autos and good roads were still in the future, and the campers at Eagle's Nest were able to achieve a feeling of isolation that would be impossible today. The women dressed in Indian fashion, with short skirts and low necklines, and wore their hair in braids. Taft and Grover sported the black berets of their Paris student days, and Browne strutted about in wide "Boul Miche" corduroy trousers, shouting operatic arias at the top of his voice. The Tafts had a supply of Greek costumes, left over from a pageant at the Art Institute, and on many a summer evening the whole colony would don the flowing habiliments of Attica and dance in and out of the trees along

the bluff, fluttering the draperies in the silver moonlight and crying to one another: "On such a night Pan and the dryads dance in the moonlight. Come, let us join him in the dance!"[1]

"Processions" became a more or less regular feature of camp life at Eagle's Nest. There were gypsy processions, and Indian-and-pioneer processions, in which a covered wagon, accompanied by a faithful cow, would be overtaken and assaulted by eight fierce Indians. But the procession to end all processions was the one which the campers contrived to greet Dr. James Breasted, the eminent Egyptologist who was to spend a week-end at Eagle's Nest. As the great orientalist entered the confines of the camp, he was met by the white-shrouded figure of a priestess, who silently led the way through the forest. Before the camp gate was reached, the good doctor and his guide passed twenty white, seated figures on either side of the road, supposed to represent the stone Colossi of Memnon. Dr. Breasted graciously professed to be reminded of Karnak. The following afternoon, some fifty "Egyptians," including the "Colossi," wound solemnly along the bluff, with a flutist playing suitable selections from *Aida*. Dr. Breasted himself participated, attired as an Egyptian slave-driver, and at the end of the march (at the home of Wallace Heckman, the lawyer who owned the land on which the camp was built) a heavily-manacled slave (with chains from the porch-swing) made an impressive speech in Arabic. On this occasion the annual "rent" of $1 was ceremoniously paid to Mr. Heckman—"eighty-nine pennies, two slugs, and some postage."

Another atelier of distinction was the barn studio on the Midway at the University of Chicago that Lorado Taft took over in 1906. From then until 1929, when the studio was moved to more suitable quarters on Ingleside Avenue, this red brick

1. Ada B. Taft, *Lorado Taft, Sculptor and Citizen* (Greensboro: published by Mary Taft Smith, 1946), pp. 45-46.

barn (two frame barns were later added) was the sculpture-capitol of the universe. Here, in thirteen rambling studios connected cell by cell like the chambered nautilus, Taft and a series of apprentices and students worked on the magnificent sculptures which were to be Lorado Taft's comment in concrete and stone on life, time, and eternity.

The studios themselves opened on a large roofed court which had a fireplace and a fountain, a marble cutting room, and a stage for plays. One end of the court was taken up by the original plaster cast of Taft's bronze group, *Great Lakes*, which stands today on the south side of the Art Institute. Beneath the huge figures of the five lakes was a little kitchen which Taft called "the only submarine kitchen in Chicago"[2] where the noonday meal for the twenty-five or so apprentices, students, and visiting artist friends was prepared. In the corridor behind this tiny kitchen a little bower with artificial vines and a bench had been created as a rendezvous and breakfast nook for the students. The Midway Studio was an idyllic spot, and young men and women from all over the Mid-West came there to work, while studying at the Art Institute.

A suitable memorial to the old Midway Studio today is Taft's group called "The Fountain of Time," which stands at the Washington Park end of the Midway. Originally Taft had envisaged the entire Midway lined with portrait statues and intersected by I. K. Pond-designed bridges symbolizing Religion, Science, and Art, with "The Fountain of Time" at one end and a group to be called "The Fountain of Creation" at the other, or Jackson Park end. This latter would stand up against the Illinois Central tracks. "Everybody else has something against the Illinois Central, why shouldn't we?" Taft said facetiously. But Lorado never got anything against the Illinois Central; the plan never materialized.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

The "Fountain of Time," however, did come into being and can be seen today at the western end of the Midway. The idea for it was based on the couplet by Austin Dobson:

> Time goes, you say? Ah no,
> Alas, time stays. We go.

This work was perhaps Taft's greatest accomplishment. He himself wrote of it:

> The words brought before me a picture which fancy speedily transformed into a colossal work of sculpture. I saw the mighty crag-like figure of Time, mantled like one of Sargent's prophets, leaning upon his staff, his chin upon his hand, and watching with cynical, inscrutable gaze the endless march of humanity—a majestic relief of marble, I saw it, swinging in a wide circle around the form of the lone sentinel and made up of the shapes of hurrying men and women and children in endless procession, ever impelled by the winds of destiny in the inexorable lock-step of the ages. Theirs the "fateful forward movement" which has not ceased since time began. But in that crowded concourse how few detach themselves from the greyness of the dusky caravan, how few there are who even lift their heads. Here an over-taxed body falls—and a place is vacant for a moment; there a strong man turns to the silent, shrouded reviewer and with lifted arms utters the cry of the old-time gladiators: "Hail Caesar, we who go to our death salute thee"—and presses forward.[3]

Lorado Taft, a gentle, scholarly, and religious man, was a classicist. After 1913, when the controversial Armory Show at the Art Institute launched the Post-Impressionist school in Chicago, Taft, hitherto venerated by students, came into disrepute with the new admirers of Cézanne, Matisse, Van Gogh, Modigliani, Gauguin, and Seurat. He was a relic, a fuddy-duddy. The new sculptural pied piper was the Polish wild man, Stanley Szukalski, who was the son of a Chicago blacksmith and

3. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

whose sculpture, to Taft's mind, looked like something hammered out on an anvil with a duck-down pillow. Taft continued to work down on the Midway, but the closing years of his career were saddened by the thought that a new generation of artists held him and his deeply philosophical, beautifully executed work in contempt.

There were other pre-Riccardo ateliers in Chicago—the Bertsche and Cooper "Bull-Pen" on Huron Street where a craftsman named Oz Cooper gave to the printing world his "Cooper Black" and other unique type faces; Tennessee Anderson's salon (she was Sherwood Anderson's wife) where Mrs. Anderson, a fairly talented sculptress herself, encouraged artists in much the same way that Mrs. William Vaughn Moody encouraged poets and writers; and more recently the artists colony on Burton Place between Wells and LaSalle, where Boris Anisfield, professor of advanced drawing and painting at the Art Institute, was the center of a group of a hundred Chicago artists, whose custom it was to make gala on holidays by roasting a whole lamb or a pig over an outdoor barbecue in the yard of one of the studios. And somewhat further away but still in the Chicago cultural orbit were Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin, John Norton and Thomas Tallmadge's Summer Art School at Saugatuck, Michigan, and Jens Jensen's utopia on Green Bay. From then until now, Chicago has not lacked for artists, for places for artists to work, for talk about art, and for genuine love and appreciation of art. It has lacked only galleries and self-confidence enough to buy the works its artists create.

There wasn't any art in Chicago until 1855. The town was too busy trying to lift itself out of the muck and mud that sucked down sidewalks, buildings, and citizens; too busy drinking and building and politicking; too busy growing the broad shoulders that Sandburg's tool handler, stacker of wheat, and player-with-railroads town would require. In that year, how-

ever, Chicago's first artist was enticed away from Europe by the prospect of making a quick fortune painting uncouth Chicago's over-dressed ladies. His name was G. P. A. Healy, and Chicago, which didn't know any better, thought he was wonderful. Maybe he was a little bit wonderful at that; everybody who could afford it patronized him, and he did very well indeed, although there were those who called his work "over-modeled and photographic."

Things began picking up in 1866, when the Academy of Design was founded. The Academy held its exhibitions in the Crosby Opera House, Bierstad's "The Yosemite Valley" being the perennial favorite. H. C. Ford's landscapes, Walter Shirlaw's engravings, and works by J. F. Gookins, Henry W. Elkins, D. F. Bigelow, and Theodore Pine were also well thought of by the amateur connoisseurs of art along Washington Street in those days. Crosby's Opera House burned down, as previously noted, in the great fire of '71, but the Academy of Design continued, changing its name first to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and finally (1882) to the Art Institute of Chicago. By this time Chicago's ever-generous business titans had discovered art (or their wives had) and George Armour, the meat-packer, became the first president of the new Art Institute. He was succeeded by Levi Z. Leiter of Leiter and Fields Department Store, and Leiter in turn gave way to Charles L. Hutchinson, who didn't need his wife to get him enthused about art and who was one of the true pillars of culture in Chicago for many years. There was an art school and a museum in connection with the Art Institute, in charge of the distinguished W. M. R. French.

For three years the Art Institute occupied rented rooms in a building located on the southwest corner of State and Monroe. In 1882 the trustees acquired property at the corner of Michigan and Van Buren for the Institute's own building, and in 1887 a fine new edifice designed by John Wellborn Root was

erected on the site. In 1892, with the Columbian Exposition just over the horizon and all Chicago fevered with confidence, this building was sold to the Chicago Club, which still occupies the premises.

The trustees of the Columbian Exposition proposed to spend $200,000 on a temporary lake-front building to be used for an exhibition of "World Congresses." The Art Institute trustees suggested that they supplement this fund with the proceeds of the sale of the Art Institute building at Michigan and Van Buren, the joint fund to be used to erect a fine, permanent structure on the lake front at Adams and Michigan, which the Art Institute would occupy exclusively after the Exposition was over. No sooner said than done, and in 1893 (May, to be exact) the present Bedford limestone building, designed in Italian Rennaissance style by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, was erected. The rich tumbled over themselves in their eagerness to do nice things for the new cultural asset, Mrs. Henry Field donating the characteristic lions at the entrance in 1894. The Fullerton family added the Fullerton Lecture Room in memory of Alex N. Fullerton in 1897. Martin Ryerson (who also didn't need his wife to tell him about art) gave the Ryerson Library in 1901; Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Blackstone added the Blackstone Hall for sculpture in 1903.

The Columbian Exposition, remembered chiefly for the Burnham buildings on the Midway and the abdominal manoeuvers of Little Egypt, did a lot for Chicago art. It launched a Chicago school of art practice that was to last for twenty years, and the splendid exhibition of art treasures from all over the world at the Art Institute whetted the art appetite of wealthy Chicagoans. There was no classical tradition in Chicago and, outside of a few Greek vases, the Institute had no classical collection to speak of. After the Exposition, Martin Ryerson, Charles Hutchinson, Edward Ayres, William O. Goodman, Frank G. Logan, Charles H. Worcester, and others

threw all their business ability into the task of filling the new building with a suitable collection of art works. Ryerson and Hutchinson went to Europe and immediately pulled off a brilliant coup d'état in the best Chicago business style. Prince Demidoff had advertised an auction of his art treasures in Florence, Italy; the two Chicagoans hurried to Florence, made a deal with the prince for the cream of the crop, and left the auctioneer with so few paintings that the auction had to be called off. European art lovers yelled "foul," but Ryerson and Hutchinson had the pictures, which were soon gracing the walls of the Chicago Art Institute. And what pictures they were: paintings by Ten Borch, Hals, Hobbema, Massys, Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Ruisdael, and Jan Steen. The Chicagoans had separated Demidoff from Van Ostade's "Golden Wedding" for $40,457, from Hobbema's "Water Mill" for $30,649, and from Rembrandt's "Young Girl at an Open Half-Door" for a mere $24,700.

That was a better than average beginning. Today, thanks largely to Mrs. Potter Palmer and Mrs. L. L. Coburn, the Art Institute has the finest 18th century French collection in the country. Mrs. Palmer introduced modern art to the Institute when she first lent and later gave her collection of French impressionist work—the same impressionist movement that had been launched over the tables of the Café Guerbois in the 1870's. Monet, Degas, and Renoir were represented—the latter's "Two Little Circus Girls" having been acquired by Mrs. Palmer in 1892 for a piddling $1,750. This French collection was further strengthened in 1934 when the eccentric Mrs. L. L. Coburn, who lived in a hotel suite overflowing with valuable paintings, many of which were simply piled in corners for lack of wall space, donated two Degas, some Renoirs, a Toulouse-Lautrec, a Manet, an early Picasso, two Cézannes, and many others.

The traditionalists, the impressionists, and their imitators

ruled the roost at the Art Institute until 1913, when the Armory Show set off an explosion which still reverberates faintly in 1953. The Armory Show, so-called because it had been held in a New York armory before coming to Chicago, was a daring collection of post-impressionist and cubist work. The Chicago lawyer and art patron, Arthur Jerome Eddy, was largely responsible for bringing it to Chicago, and many were the maledictions that were hurled at his head. Later, Eddy was to write a book on cubism and the post-impressionists which was to gain him credit for changing the art taste of the United States, but in 1913 a storm of criticism and reproach rained down on him. The Art Institute tried to hide the Armory Show by sticking it off in a corner and putting out no publicity about it, but the newspapers got wind of it anyway. Harriet Monroe, then art critic for the *Tribune*, liked the idea, and in the March 16, 1913 issue of the paper she called it "the most important collection of modern art ever held . . . Chicago is to have the best of it." She quoted from a French critic, Guy Charles Gros: "These first years of our century announce an efflorescence which will be one of the richest in the history of art."

Miss Monroe, Mr. Eddy, and Mr. Gros were very much in the minority, however. The Chicago *Evening Post* called the Armory Show "Barnumized Art," and announced testily that "a big crowd was expected at the freak art exhibit." The Director of the Art Institute left town, after disavowing any implied approval of the "freak" pictures and defending the right of the Institute to "give a hearing to strange and heretical doctrines."

During their stay in Chicago the "freak pictures" divided local art lovers, with the majority strongly disapproving of them. But the post-impressionists captured the school of the Art Institute, routing the traditionalists; post-impressionism and cubism became synonymous with youth and revolt, and, therefore, were bound to win. The Art Institute hesitatingly bought

its first Matisse in 1921 (the first Matisse purchased for an American museum) and in 1926 the distinguished Chicago artist, the independently wealthy Frederick Clay Bartlett, firmly established post-impressionism in the Art Institute by presenting the Helen Birch Bartlett Collection in memory of his wife. Among the artists represented were Cézanne, Matisse, Van Gogh, Modigliani, Seurat, and Gauguin. Bartlett had purchased Seurat's "La Grande Jatte" for $24,000, and Chicagoans thought he was crazy until they learned that a French syndicate had later offered him $450,000 for "La Grande Jatte," Cézanne's "Basket of Apples," and Van Gogh's "Bedroom at Arles."

Today Chicago's Art Institute, with its various schools—Weaving, Painting, Sculpture, Design, Drama, etc.—is generally recognized as one of the finest in the world. Over a million people visit it annually. More than 10,000 attend its free evening lectures, called "Adventures in the Arts." It presents annually more than six hundred lecture and gallery tours. It also presents expositions of a type scorned in the East, in which such subjects as abstract art are explained in simple, non-technical language, with few words and many photos, blowups, diagrams, etc. Through its Public School Art Society it brings the great paintings right into the school rooms instead of waiting for the school children to come to the Institute. And it tries to titillate the general public with such questions as these: "Is it more realistic for an artist to paint what he sees, what he knows exists, or what he feels?"—"Is it more realistic for a sculptor to simulate real flesh or to create a work which frankly looks like stone?"—"Is it more realistic for him to carve a piece which suggests motion, or one which actually moves?" And the public replies by thronging the Institute.

Some great artists have passed through the school of the Art Institute, both as pupils and instructors. As it was in the newspaper field, so it has been in the art field: Chicago has spawned

a colorful array of artists who have achieved maturity and then have "graduated" elsewhere. Some have gone to Paris, more to New York. A few to New Mexico. Even fewer to New England.

The Golden Age of Chicago letters, previously commented on, was also the Golden Age of Chicago art. While Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Hecht, Sandburg, and Margaret Anderson were embellishing American belles-lettres with their imperishable verbiage, artists like Jerome Blum, Joseph Allworthy, Anthony Angarola and Emil Arnim, and sculptors of the calibre of Stanley Szukalski and Carl Hallsthammar were following the post-impressionist flag to glory, if not to gold. Blum was the Mid-West Gauguin, finding inspiration in Chicago, rather than in Tahiti, and splashing his canvases with bold, flowing colors. Allworthy did exquisite portraits in the Velasquez manner, full of zest tinctured with melancholy, and was the center of frequent scenes at the Art Institute when he insisted in lying prone upon the floor the better to observe certain canvases. Anthony Angarola, who died prematurely in 1929 at the age of thirty-six, was classed with the radicals after the Armory Show, but he went back to Giotto, Holbein, and Brueghel for his primary inspiration. Emil Arnim, one of the colony of artists that moved into the souvenir shops on East 57th Street after the Columbian Exposition, was a woodcarver and worker in stone and ceramics who was to find in New Mexico what Van Gogh had found in the south of France. Szukalski was a temperamental Pole, full of genius and rage, a friend of Ben Hecht and Max Bodenheim who delighted in baiting the prim and successful and was not above smashing his own work with his cane when he did not like the way it was displayed at the Art Institute. He wore his thick black hair bobbed like a girl's, crowned it with a left-bankish tam, and let his ill-fitting clothes hang from his spare frame. But the Polish wild man walked off with all the marbles, winning a

Chicago heiress out from under the very noses of her horrified parents and whisking her off to Hollywood and a life of leisure on the Golden Shore. Carl Hallsthammar, who came to Chicago in 1924, was a more conservative sculptor whose "Venus in Red Cherry" is one of the best examples of wood sculpture to be found.

Chicago's greatest primitive was T. A. Hoyer, who died in 1949 at the age of 75. Hoyer was as fabulous in his daily life as he was in the paintings he did of forests and farms of his native Denmark, the prairies of the Mid-West, the fjords of the North Sea, and the glorious sweep of Lake Michigan. He was the son of a wealthy coaldealer and was apprenticed at the age of 19 to the Danish Court Painter, Franz Hennesen. After serving his apprenticeship, young Hoyer became an acrobat, and it was as a member of an acrobatic troupe that he came to Chicago. Here he dropped acrobatics and began to devote himself entirely to painting. He painted slowly, carefully organizing each picture in his mind before he started work. As an old man, his one regret was that he couldn't possibly paint everything he had planned. Shortly before his death, he said he had enough pictures definitely in mind to keep him busy for a thousand years. Hoyer was one of the few Chicago artists to attain important recognition by New York's Museum of Modern Art. Nine of his paintings are there, and three of them are honored by reproduction in the catalog. One, "Inside the Barn," is said by critics to rank with any primitive this side of the Atlantic.

Perhaps the best of the abstractionists to work in town was Rudolph Weisenborn, a Chicago-born artist who, for five years in the 'twenties, was president of the radical No-Jury Society ("No-Jury Means Freedom") and as such the highly-articulate leader of the abstractionists, cubists, and post-impressionists in their forays against Lorado Taft and the traditionalists. As a result of his activity in behalf of the No-Jury Society Weisenborn was routed out of bed one dawn by two burly

detectives who were rounding up "anarchists." Seems the heavy-footed Chicago Police Department had figured that anybody who was against juries must be dangerous. When Weisenborn pointed out to them that the No-Jury Society held its exhibitions at Marshall Field's, the minions of the law were nonplussed, for surely Marshall Field would not harbor agitators. After much cerebration on the part of the Pinkertons, Weisenborn was grudgingly released.

Weisenborn recovered from this unexpected attention and went on to found the "Neo-Arlimusc Society" (arts, literature, music, and science) and to marry a girl named Fritzi, who describes herself as "a dumb female Jewess who spent about $25 a week on books and prints by Maxfield Parrish." Fritzi and time succeeded in taming down Rudy; he went on to become a very acceptable abstractionist and an instructor at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. One of the "Seven Lively Arts" murals in Riccardo's is by Weisenborn.

There were a lot of very good Jewish artists in Chicago in the twenties and thirties, artists who found their inspiration in the great cultural and religious heritage of Judaism, or in the trials and tribulations of their contemporary coreligionists along Roosevelt Road. Rifka Angel, who had few equals in naive and primitive expressionism, was one. The late Todros Geller, who died in 1949, was the idol of the Chicago Jewish community, "the dean of Jewish artists." Today David Bekker, who derives from Marc Chagall and Max Weber, does Jewish life in a dramatic, emotional, and sincere style. The Jew, in one manifestation or another, is his model in wood-carvings, paintings, linoleum cuts. Syd Harris of the *Daily News* says that "a hundred years from now Bekker will be ranked among the best."

Who's doing what today in Chicago?

To begin with, there are the fabulous Albright twins, Ivan Le Lorraine and Malvin Marr. Malvin calls himself "Zsisley"

and signs his work that way because he likes to be listed last in the catalogs. The Albright twins are still going strong, but here's what Daniel Catton Rich, present Director of the Art Institute, had to say about them back in 1932:

> Near Chicago at Warrenville live two brothers, Ivan Le Lorraine and Malvin Marr Albright. Malvin is a sculptor who paints as well. "Flowers" shows his feeling for color harmonies. Ivan Albright's work is highly original and automatically creates a stir wherever shown.... His approach is deeply objective and a strange light, playing over the figures, picks out in elaborate detail wrinkles and sagging flesh, rotting silks and dead flowers. Certain critics have decided that Albright's work is an unsuccessful attempt at the sculpturesque; to see it in this way is to ignore the interesting abstract patterns of dead color and sulphurous light that weave across the canvas. All of his figures are infused with melancholy; their eyes look out from airless rectangles with a feeling of deep resignation. The mood is Mid-Western, hopeless, the mood of a Spoon River in paint.[4]

Nothing has happened in twenty years to change that description of the work of the Albright boys. "Zsisley's" work today is more conventional and less "sculpturesque" than Ivan's, although "Zsisley" is the sculptor. By the same token, "Zsisley" doesn't get either the attention or the fees for his work that the more controversial Ivan does.

The Albright boys come by their interest in art honestly. Their father, Adam Albright, was an artist who was famous for his bucolic scenes of barefoot children—a far cry from the seamy, cynical symbolism of son Ivan's "Into the World Came a Soul Called Ida," for instance. They work in studios at Warrenville, Illinois, where they took over an abandoned Methodist Church. For awhile Ivan painted in the balcony and Zsisley down on the main floor. Then Ivan built a studio of his own and painted it white. Zsisley promptly built one just like it and

4. Article on "Chicago Painters," *American Magazine of Art*, Feb., 1932.

painted it pink. Today they use the church as a storehouse, and the resigned melancholy of both men's work, which seems to relate them to Ecclesiastes and Lamentations, removes what incongruity there might ordinarily be in such an arrangement.

Both brothers like long, semi-Biblical, poetic titles. Ivan's striking, repelling, and attention-getting picture of a middle-aged, lump-legged actress gazing into a hand-mirror is called "Into the World Came a Soul Called Ida." His lonely monk, with folded hands holding a crucifix, is titled "He Verily Loveth Me and I Him." The tired old fisherman smoking a cigarette he calls "Heavy the Oar to Him Who is Tired, Heavy the Coat, Heavy the Sea." And brother Zsisley calls one of his best sculptures "Let Him Who Is Without Sin Among Ye Cast the First Stone."

The twins each did a mural for their friend Ric's restaurant, and when they are in town they can generally be found there, sipping Chianti and arguing volubly with all comers. They don't like to be reminded about the WPA Art Project; Ivan thinks nothing of asking $100,000 for a painting now on the grounds that the old masters bring that price and that he's as good as any old master. He seldom takes less than $25,000. Both brothers went out to Hollywood a couple of years ago when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer signed them to do the shocking portrait that is featured in the movie *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. They did a suitably horrible painting, pocketed $75,000 for it, and came back to Rush Street to argue with Ric about the proper proportion of gin to vermouth in the dry martini.

Ivan, at any rate, has had the art critics doing double-takes and developing eye tics for years. They can't explain him. Irwin St. John Tucker tried it in the *Herald-Examiner* one time, and came up with this (commenting on "Ida"):

> The mystery of life dwells in the fact that the noumenon, the hidden meaning of a thing, is reflected in its phenomenon, that

which we believe we understand. Only an individual with the soul of an artist has the insight to picture the noumenon in a given phenomenon, and here the artist interprets the noumenon as this soul which came into the world seeking expression through desires. Her desires, emotions and interests were but the tools of an indwelling spirit. The artist shows with a terrible vividness that these tools failed to cooperate with nature and her laws.

Then, throwing the whole thing over in disgust, Mr. St. John Tucker cries: "Why should he paint a woman with flesh the color of a corpse drowned six weeks?"

Why, indeed?

Ranking right up there with the Albright brothers is a slight, blonde, pastel-shade of a man named Aaron Bohrod. *LIFE* did a recent spread on him and called him "America's No. 1 painter of neon lights," and so he is. Aaron was born in Chicago in 1907 of Bessarabian parents, and has never been tempted by the siren songs of New York and Paris. He studied at the Art Institute, selling score-cards at Comiskey Park and Wrigley Field to pay his tuition, and then spent a brief period at the Art Student's League in New York, where he was taught by John Sloan. Back he came to Chicago, to find his inspiration in the city's streets and in the small towns of the Mid-West, and here he has been ever since. He has become completely identified with Chicago, painting in water-color and gouache, and with tenderness, her poster-pocked tenements, her empty lots piled with tin cans and wrecked cars, her dreary suburban stations her rain-spattered streets and alleys. His "Evening in Ros common," painted in a small Michigan town, is one of his best works. Bohrod, in a sense, is to Chicago art what Nelson Algren is to Chicago writing.

The Albrights and Aaron Bohrod are the best known of present-day Chicago artists, but there are a lot of other excellent craftsmen in town: Rainey Bennett, who went from jazz-band player to artist, and is currently the No. 1 commercial

artist in Chicago; Mark Turbyfill, poet, dancer, and painter whose watercolors are romantic and dramatic, and who is far from achieving the recognition his work deserves; Paul Trebilock, who did the famous portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt for Columbia University; David Bekker, John F. Stenvall, Copeland C. Burg (who doubles as a newspaperman), Egon Weiner, William Schwartz, Harry Mintz, Mikoyo Ito, Claude Bentley, and many others. A lively and talented group of women painters holds an annual February exhibition in the art gallery of Mandel Brothers store; in 1953 some excellent caseins, oils, and water colors by Marianne Magnuson, Jean Plaut, Juliet Rago, Zabeth Selover, Dorothy Stafford, and Louise Yochim were shown.

Fifty years ago, Chicagoans went directly to Europe for their art. While Boston society women were having their portraits painted by Sargent, Chicago women were bringing Sorolla y Bastida, the great Spanish master of sunlight and color, to the Mid-West to dress them in mantillas and scarves and paint them in great splashes of olive, black, orange, and red. Chicago society blondes imported the celebrated Anders Zorn. Chicago women would no more have thought of having their portraits done in New York than they would have of attending the First Ward Ball in the company of Bath-House John Coughlin. But somewhere along the line all this was changed; perhaps the Depression, that all-but-mortal blow to Chicago's civic ego, was responsible. Today, Chicago painters get very few commissions from Chicagoans. And yet, during a four-year period at the Metropolitan and Carnegie exhibits in New York, Chicago artists have taken more prizes, individually and collectively, than those of any other city!

Chicago had the galleries, until the owners, through bitter experience, discovered Chicago's art-inferiority complex. The Associated American Artists had one in town until recently. Until they found out that, in a six-month period, they sold

$63,420 worth of pictures priced over $200 each out of their New York gallery to Chicagoans for shipment to Chicago, and only $19,650 in their Chicago gallery for the same period. The same pictures were available in Chicago as in New York. And to add gall to the wormwood, most of the business in the Chicago gallery was for shipment to other parts of the Mid-West. The Knoedler Gallery had the same experience. As a result, the galleries very sensibly retreated to New York. "Chicagoans apparently suffer from an inferiority complex," commented Emily Genauer in "The Chicago Art Story" in the July '51 issue of *Theatre Arts Magazine*. "Their own suburbs may extend from North Dakota to New Orleans, but they themselves remain a suburb of New York."

In 1904, the representatives of 29 nations met in Arabia to select a city of spiritual and cultural consciousness which would be the most representative of any in the world. After long deliberation they selected Chicago, and voted to erect their Bahai Temple just above the city on the North Shore of Lake Michigan.

There are those who would say that this shows nothing but the ill judgment of the members of the Bahai movement. Perhaps. And perhaps not. Ric Riccardo, at any rate, agrees with the followers of Bahai. "Chicago will be the world's greatest art center," he says. It has everything but the galleries, and they'll come back. It has a great art school, a great museum, great artists. And it has Riccardo's.

Maybe, Ric. Meanwhile, another helping of *polenta*, if you don't mind, and another glass of Chianti.

Until that day of fulfillment comes, however, the remark attributed to Groucho Marx upon being informed of his rejection for membership in an exclusive club, will stand as a commentary on Chicago's art inferiority. "I wouldn't," said Groucho loftily, "want to belong to any club that would have me as a member."

LET'S GO OUT *and get a drink.*—JOHN WELLBORN ROOT *to fellow celebrities after the dedication of the Woman's Temple of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which he designed, 1882.*

Chapter VIII

The Builders

THE MOST enduring of all the Chicago "schools," as vital and as significant today as it was sixty years ago, when it came into being, is the architectural practice known as "Chicago construction." Five decades in time separate Louis Sullivan's Carson, Pirie Scott Building at State and Madison and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's glamorous glass and steel tower at 860 Lake Shore Drive, but clearly discernible in the older building, with its great banks of windows and terra-cotta-covered steel frame, is the fundamental architectural principle that shines forth in ultra-modernity in the shimmering cliff on the Drive. For van der Rohe (now head of the Architecture Department at Illinois Institute of Technology), like Frank Lloyd Wright and many others, calls Louis H. Sullivan "*lieber Meister.*"

Not that Sullivan, a nettlesome and arrogant Boston Irishman, gave a hoot. He didn't aspire to be anybody's "Meister"; he had a vast contempt for draftsmen and apprentices and was not reticent about showing it. Frank Lloyd Wright worked with him for seven years and was "the pencil in his hand," and yet not until he was a broken and dying man did Sullivan call the talented designer of the Hotel Imperial "Frank." What Frank Lloyd Wright and the others who worked in the office

of Adler and Sullivan got from "*lieber Meister*" was not instruction but the artist's feeling for the *mystique* of architecture; they sensed the poet beneath the crusty exterior, and although he seldom deliberately taught them anything they could not be in his presence without absorbing his spirit and his love for his chosen profession. His approach was not that of a pedagogue but rather of the evangelist. He was an architectural John the Baptist, personally hard to live with, but a voice crying in the wilderness and commanding both respect and devotion.

In the history of "Chicago construction," the names of two great architectural firms lead all the rest—Adler and Sullivan, and Burnham and Root. *Post anno incendii*, these were the important names, although there were others—Holabird, Baumann, Atwood, Pond. All good men, all good architects. But Louis Sullivan and John Wellborn Root alone of them were touched with genius, and when the roll of American architects is called, these two must come close to leading all the rest.

Root and Sullivan were the poets, the visionaries, the mystics whose pencil strokes turned miraculously into graceful, upflowing temples and towers. "Uncle Dan" Burnham and Dankmar Adler were the business men, the executives, the jobgetters, the experts in public relations. Without them genius would have been wasted in obscurity, and so they played their parts and played them well. But they were not artists. They were executives. So the story of "Chicago construction," although it must deal with the firms of Adler and Sullivan and Burnham and Root, really has little to do with the two senior partners.

The essence of "Chicago construction" and the thing that distinguished it in theory from the architecture of the East Coast is to be found in Louis Sullivan's dictum that "form follows function." In other words, the exterior of a building is determined by what the interior is to be used for. This was a radical doctrine at the time; the eastern architects were annoyed

by the necessity of planning multi-storied buildings, and they simply piled story on story with no regard for the use to which the building was to be put, with no feeling for the uniqueness and beauty and challenge of the "sky-scraper." Sullivan and Root, on the other hand, greeted the multi-storied building joyously. They saw the skyscraper as a new art form—with the result that historians of the art of architecture must pilgrimage to Chicago to study the beginnings of the skyscraper as art: Root's Monadnock and Kearsarge Buildings—the last examples of masonry construction—and Sullivan's Carson, Pirie Scott and 30 North LaSalle Street buildings, among the first to employ "Chicago construction." Form followed function in all of these, and the Sullivan edifices first showed the world the strength of structural steel, the beauty of terra cotta, and the light, ethereal effect of massed windows.

John Wellborn Root, about whom Harriet Monroe has written an ecstatic and uncritical biography,[1] was very possibly one of the most popular men in Chicago's history. He came to Chicago after graduating with a degree in civil engineering from the City College of New York in 1869, and went to work as a draftsman with the firm of Carter, Drake, and Wight right after the fire of '71. The firm was busier than a pup in a boneyard as a result of the conflagration, and when a draftsman by the name of Daniel Hudson Burnham suggested to Root and a few others that this would be the ideal time to set themselves up in the architectural business, a group of young draftsmen headed by Burnham left Carter, Drake and Wight and set up the firm of Burnham and Root.

At the time Root was a stocky, jovial, bumptious character who needed the steady Burnham to keep him from taking off into the stratosphere. Even the uncritical Harriet Monroe admits that he was abundantly possessed of a "masterful impu-

1. Harriet Monroe, *John Wellborn Root* (Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1896).

dence which only success can justify." Sullivan, less bemused than Harriet, says in his autobiography that Root was "a man of the world, of the flesh, and considerably of the devil," and filled with a "vanity which he tactfully took pains should not be too obtrusive."[2] But Root was the toast of bohemia in short order, as well as the darling of the drawing rooms. He was one of the most sought-after dinner guests in town; he could swim; he could play the piano; he recited poetry; he was organist at the First Presbyterian Church. In his spare time he dabbled in Swedenborgianism (Burnham was a Swedenborgian) and wrote erudite tomes on architecture and philosophy. A many-sided young man was John Wellborn Root. About as unlike Louis Sullivan as it was possible to be. And yet Sullivan, looking beneath this iridescent surface, saw a kindred spirit, a fellow-poet. He found artistic integrity in Root, and marked the lack of the vital spark in his partner, Burnham, although admitting that Uncle Dan was an honest man "within the limits of his understanding."

The Chicago that Root and Sullivan found after the fire was an architecturally naive town, addicted to the use of heavy iron tools and ignorant of the finer stages of cutting and polishing. Its architects were mostly self-educated men who had graduated from the ranks of the contractors and who had little or no formal education. Supplementing these were a few eastern graduates of the Beaux Arts in Paris, capable designers, but wedded to the traditional, conservative forms. Chicago was too young a city to have any relics of 18th century refinement to guide its architects, as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia had. Consequently, much of the new building after the fire reproduced the heavy monotony of the buildings that had burned—mansard roofs, jigsaw carvings, heavy mouldings and

2. Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), p. 287.

cornices, galvanized iron ornaments, and masses of cut stone. The architectural business itself was in a chaotic state: prices were irregular, and there was no accepted code governing the relations between architect, contractor, and client. The results were unbusinesslike procedures, lack of clear understandings, conflicts, hard feelings. This is where the senior partners of the new firms of Adler and Sullivan and Burnham and Root played their parts—they established uniform codes and prices, were exact and precise in their estimates, and exercised a scrupulous regard for the rights of their clients. Their executive ability, leagued with the new daring and poetic design of the junior partners, provided the combination for which Chicago's progressive businessmen had been looking; almost from the first the two firms prospered immensely.

Root's forte was swift ingenuity. A word, a hint, and his pencil would fly over the drawing board; in a matter of minutes a great building would lie in embryo before him. "He could really see it," said Burnham. "I've never seen anyone like him in this respect. He would grow abstracted and silent, and a faraway look would come into his eyes, and the building was there before him—every stone of it." "His works are full of life, they seem to breathe," observed Frederick Baumann at the Columbian Congress of Architects.[3]

Yet, ingenious as he was, Root never got far beyond the confines of the Romanesque. In this he copied the man who was supposed to be the best architect of the day, H. H. Richardson, designer of the Marshall Field Building. The soft, curving arches, the towers, and the battlements of the south of France may be seen in almost all of his buildings. Here Louis Sullivan was clearly the more "modern" man. But Root had an appreciation of color that few architects of his day had, not excepting Sullivan. He wrote of the "reds and yellows of brasses, the

3. Harriet Monroe, *John Wellborn Root*, p. 113.

greens of oboes and flageolets, the violets of 'cellos, and the blues of violins." Very modern indeed, and he got a lot of color into his derivative Romanesques.

Root proved his inventive genius in the interior construction of his buildings. He was a poet who was also a mathematician, and he dared experiment. Very early in his career he built the South Park Stables, carrying the roof on a kind of a flying truss that was new to the contractor. When the time came to take away the scaffolding, the contractor, predicting that the roof would fall down, refused to let any of his men take out the last supports. Root came down and knocked out the supports himself. The roof, on the new truss, was as firm as the rock of Gibraltar.

Root's outstanding contribution to construction was the use of iron imbedded in concrete for foundational piers instead of the customary heavy stone. The stone was so cumbersome that it left little room in the basement for heating systems and other apparatus, and also seriously obstructed the first floor. In his first skyscraper, the seven-story Montauk Block, erected in 1882, Root gained basement space by substituting old steel rails, with concrete around them to prevent rust. The doubters croaked "catastrophe" at Root's small piers, but Root as usual had the last laugh. The small piers went into "Jumbo," the enormous masonry-construction Monadnock Building (16 stories) that Root designed in 1889, and from then on the use of stone piers in construction was a thing of the past.

Root may have been vain, but there is some ground for believing that his "unobtrusive" show of vanity was only a device for concealing a fundamental modesty. He was diffident about his own work; when a client conferred with him about plans for a new building and confided to him that he didn't like Root's Montauk Block, Root waved his hand deprecatorily and said: "Who the hell does?" Uncle Dan Burnham was quite upset

over an anonymous article in an architectural magazine which severely criticized the work of Burnham and Root—until he learned that Root had written the article himself.

Nobody worked harder to bring the Columbian Exposition to Chicago than did Root. Once the Fair had been secured for the city, the firm of Burnham and Root threw itself enthusiastically into the job of laying out several possible sites for the Site Committee's consideration—one on the lake front around 12th Street, one in Jackson Park, and one in Washington Park. The Jackson Park location was finally selected; Burnham was named Chief of Construction for the Exposition and Root Consulting Architect.

But John Wellborn Root, *bon vivant*, gourmet, and genius, was already listening to another music. Before the Fair opened, at the age of 41, he died of pneumonia. All Chicago mourned him. Had he lived the Fair would most certainly not have been the "White City" that it became; his sketches of the buildings that had been assigned to Burnham and Root are full of fire, color, gaiety—nothing at all like the vast avenue of shining, monotonous white that finally arose on the Midway. They were never executed. The Fair was an architectural conglomeration, with firms from New York, Kansas City, and elsewhere designing buildings. Uncle Dan Burnham, trying to be politic, kowtowed to the out-of-town architects. The result was a shining "White City" for which Burnham was generally acclaimed and which seemed to please the crowds which thronged the Fair for all of a long, lovely summer, but which Louis Sullivan considered an architectural monstrosity.

Ironically enough, the one strong note of color and originality at the Columbian Exposition, and the one which is best remembered today by those who saw it, was Sullivan's Transportation Building with its magnificent Golden Door. Sullivan's opulent orientalism was alive with color; it stood out richly

amidst the opaque white of its surroundings, with the result that Burnham and Root's White City was dominated by Adler and Sullivan's non-white Transportation Building.

Like John Wellborn Root, Louis H. Sullivan had come to Chicago *post anno incendii* from the East—Boston and Philadelphia. He had studied at the Beaux Arts in Paris and then had come to Chicago where a friend, John Edelmann, had introduced him to one of the town's leading architects, Dankmar Adler. The cocky young Boston Irishman went to work for Adler, but it was not long before that intelligent and substantial citizen spotted Sullivan's genius and made him a full partner in the firm. Thereafter Sullivan was to Adler what Root was to Burnham. Adler got the jobs and buttered up the clients; Sullivan designed the buildings.

Sullivan, like Root, was "hospitable to the music of life," but in a different way. Everybody loved Root; hardly anybody even liked Sullivan. He was egotistical, arrogant, tactless. He played the role of Big Boss. He was scornful of draftsmen and apprentices. Root died young, acclaimed a genius. Sullivan lived to be an old man, drank himself to death, and passed from this vale of tears in a mean South Side flophouse, with few to mourn. Root died a success. Sullivan, on his death-bed, announced himself a failure.

But—Sullivan's was a more basic genius than Root's, although what Root might have accomplished had he lived none can say. Today Sullivan's reputation as the greatest of American architects is secure. "Chicago construction" owes more to him than to anyone else.

The crowning achievement of Sullivan's masonry period was the Auditorium. The Auditorium was to Adler and Sullivan what the Monadnock Building was to Burnham and Root.

It all began in 1885 when a well-to-do citizen by the name of Ferdinand C. Peck decided that Chicago needed an opera house. Dankmar Adler had something of a reputation as a builder of

theatres (he was considered an expert on acoustics) so Peck came to him. Adler called in Louis Sullivan. For four years Adler, Sullivan and Peck gestated the Auditorium. The strain of it shortened the life of Adler and brought Sullivan to the verge of a breakdown, but when it was completed in 1889 it was indisputably the finest opera house in the world, housed in a majestic building with a tower that "held its head in the air as a tower should."

The Auditorium project began with the installation of a vast, temporary audience room in the old Exposition Building on the lake-front near Michigan and Adams. The room was equipped with a huge scenic stage, and a two-week season of grand opera was presented in order to test the acoustics, on which Adler and Sullivan labored long and hard. The result surpassed all expectations: crowds of 6200 could hear even the faintest pianissimo; there was no echo, no reverberation—just clear, untarnished tone.

Having worked out the acoustical problem, the next step was the erection of a permanent hall containing, in addition to the opera house (or "theatre," as Peck insisted on calling it) a hotel, office building, and tower. The result was the present Auditorium Building on Michigan Avenue which now houses Roosevelt College. The "theatre" seated 4800 people; the acoustics were the best of any opera house in the world. When it was built, the Auditorium was the pride of Chicago. It was ten stories as against the nine of Root's Montauk Block; its massive tower weighed 30,000,000 pounds—the equivalent of twenty stories—and it was carried on a "floating foundation," or raft, 67 by 100 feet. This "floating foundation" was a radical experiment in the clay and mud of Chicago, and skeptics confidently expected to see Sullivan's Auditorium Tower slip clear through to China. But it neither slipped through to China nor racked the main building as some had predicted it would. Like Root's steel-in-concrete piers, it revolutionized construction.

At this time Burnham and Root were holding up plans for their 16-story Monadnock Building to see if Sullivan's tower would stand up. When it did, they applied a similar construction principle to the Monadnock.

The construction of the Auditorium and the planning of the Monadnock went forward at about the same time, and there was considerable rivalry between the two firms, Adler and Sullivan and Burnham and Root. Uncle Dan Burnham was irritated because Adler had been given the Auditorium job. Root announced that while he hadn't seen the plans for the Auditorium, he would guess that if Sullivan drew them up there would be a lot of ornament on the exterior. Sullivan had drawn up the plans and there *was* a lot of ornament (very ingenious and artistic ornament, too), for that was *lieber Meister's* specialty. But when he read Root's comment, Sullivan ripped out all the decoration and when the building went up the surface was perfectly plain. Root's shrewd guess and flippant comment thus robbed Chicago of what might have been a very beautiful addition to its architecture, for Sullivan was unsurpassed at intricate ornamentation.

Neither the Auditorium nor the Monadnock had long to enjoy their glory, however. The days of masonry construction were numbered. Masonry limited interior room, thus cutting down on both revenue and light. When the Bessemer process was worked out and the steelmen discovered that the structural steel used in bridges could also be used in building construction, masonry went down for the count.

The use of steel became a basic principle of "Chicago construction." The New York architects rejected steel at first; they were appalled by it. They preferred masonry and the kind of unsightly crowding that one found along the narrow streets of lower Manhattan. They were indifferent to the poetry of the skyscraper, of the tall building with its strong

but narrow frame and cloud-piercing spire. But Chicago's more progressive architects welcomed the advent of steel and were glad to junk the cumbersome masonry. Holabird and Roche first used steel in their Tacoma Building, Chicago; then Sullivan and Root took it up and the steel-framed, terra-cotta-covered, massed window structures characteristic of "Chicago construction" rose joyously in the Loop, one after another—30 North LaSalle, Carson Pirie Scott, and the rest. In New York the steel-hating architects sulked, pouted, studied, and finally copied.

Meanwhile Sullivan, riding the crest, was able to indulge the bad habits he had picked up in Paris as a student at the Beaux Arts. Making a lot of money, he never had any. He had designed the Auditorium Bar, and he became its best customer. He lived high off the hog; even when he was reduced to borrowing money in $25 and $50 lots from fellow-workers, he still ate $6 breakfasts at the Congress Hotel. He finally broke with Dankmar Adler; the Auditorium management, unable to tolerate his drunken caprices, kicked him out of the handsome offices in the tower which he had occupied since the erection of the building. He slid downhill until he was finally living in a hall bedroom, little bigger than a linen closet, in the smelly old Warner Hotel at 29th and Cottage Grove. His only friends at this time were Frank Lloyd Wright, Jens Jensen, and a little milliner who had cohabited with him in happier times. At this point the Cliff-Dwellers Club took pity on him and invited him to make the Club his headquarters, and during the closing years of his life he would be found at the Club every day, working fitfully on his life's story, which has been published under the title *The Autobiography of An Idea.* Thus, in approved bohemian fashion, did a great talent go to pot.

In 1925, Louis Sullivan lay on his deathbed, and rambled to his friend Jens Jensen about his life and work. "Here I lie," he

lamented, "forgotten of men! My brother architects do not remember my work and they copy, copy, copy! I am forgotten —I should have died long ago."

Jensen said: "Louis, your work will never die. Yesterday Austria's greatest living architect called me on the telephone. 'Where can I find your greatest architect, Louis Sullivan?' he said. 'I have made a pilgrimage all the way from Vienna to talk with him and see his masterpieces.' "[4]

Jensen's kind words made it possible for Sullivan to die contentedly. And, strangely enough, they were true.

If John Wellborn Root and Louis H. Sullivan ever got there, you can be sure that the battlements of heaven and the streets of Jerusalem the Golden bear the magic legend that signifies aspiration, strength, light, and joy—"Chicago construction."

4. Ralph F. Seymour. *Some Went This Way* (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1945), p. 80.

Harriet Monroe

Marshall Head Photo

Eunice Tietjens

Margaret Anderson

Joseph Medill

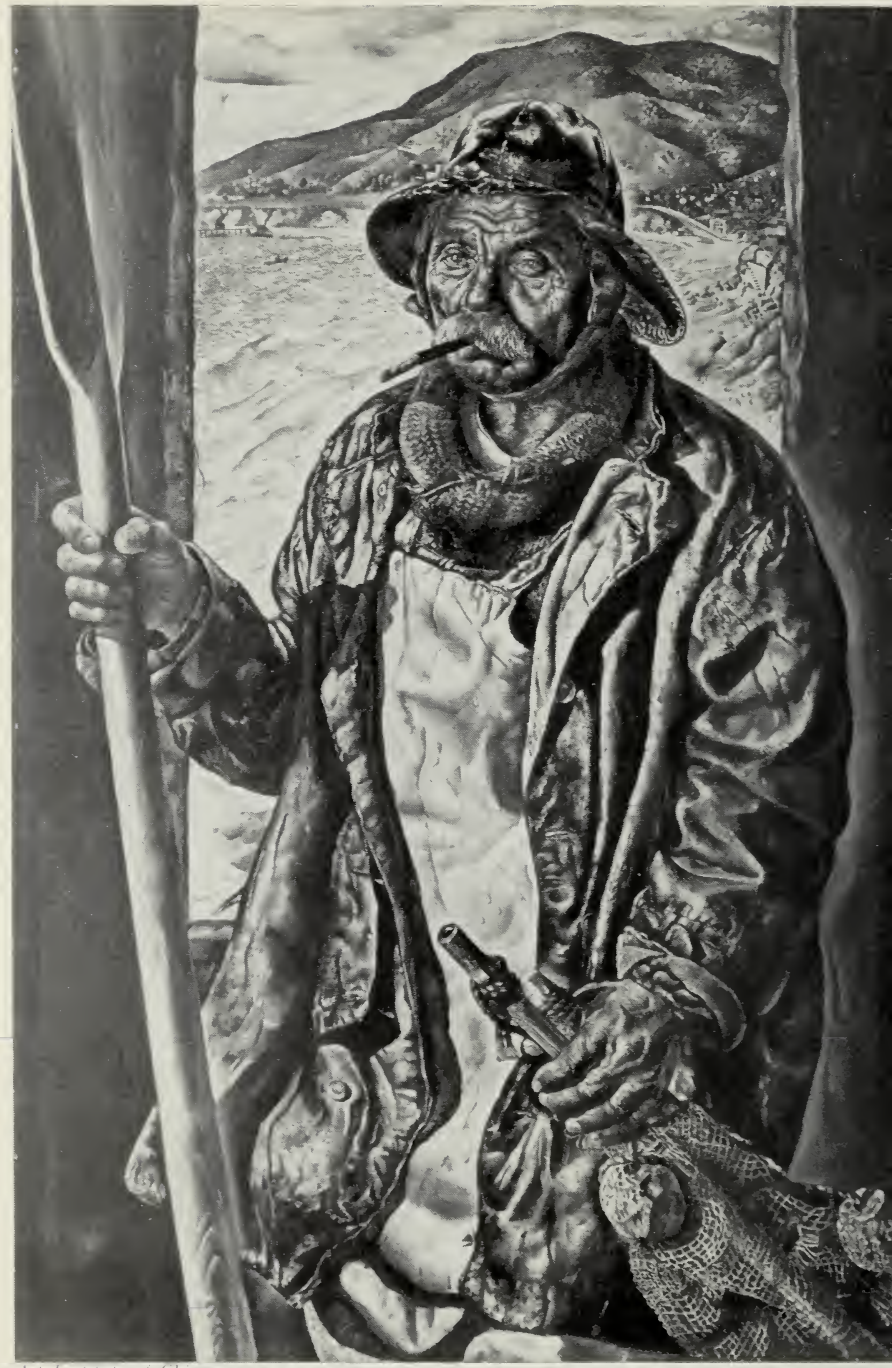
Chicago Tribune Photo

Adelina Patti

Mary Garden

Paul Stone Raymor Photo

Lorado Taft



Art Institute of Chicago

"Heavy the Oar to Him Who Is Tired,
Heavy the Coat, Heavy the Sea."
Painting by Ivan L. Albright.

Louis Sullivan

Vachel Lindsay

F. H. Burke Photo

Stanley Szukalski

Maurice Browne

I REGARD *the theatre as the most delectable form of fiction.*
—ASHTON STEVENS

Chapter IX

A Stage by the Lake

THE NEXT TIME you are in the Sherman Hotel at Clark and Randolph, cross the lobby in a westerly direction and keep going until you come upon an ornate restaurant and bar called the Celtic Room. Then, if you like, you may take off your shoes. People will look at you askance, but think nothing of it. They won't know, as you do, that this is holy ground.

But it is. The Celtic Room is all that is left of a venerable theatre that was glory of the Chicago stage in the Gay 90's—the fabulous Hooley's. Here, only a few feet from where you stand at the bar, the incomparable E. H. Sothern performed in *An Enemy to the King*. Here Mrs. Leslie Carter coquetted in *Zaza*, and one night saucily flipped her slipper into the lap of Mayor Carter Harrison's sister, who was sitting in a box near the stage. Our Carter enjoyed the incident hugely but his sister froze into a disapproving silence. Modjeska, Fanny Davenport, Minnie Maddern Fiske, Rosina Vokes, Eleanora Duse, Maxine Elliott and William Gillette trod these hallowed boards. So did the great Broadway repertory companies—the Union Square, the Madison Square, Wallack's, and Augustin Daly's. Olga Nethersole made her debut in *Romeo and Juliet* here, with Maurice Barrymore. Ada Rehan starred in *Much Ado About Nothing*, right in this room. So, if you are the sentimental type who likes to recall the days when there was theatre in Chicago,

raise your glass in a silent toast to the good old days and good old players.

Hooley's was quite a place. R. M. Hooley, the proprietor and manager, had leased Bryan Hall (on the site of the present Grand Opera House) for several years before the Fire and had put on about everything there was to put on there—burlesque, vaudeville, prize fights, opera, and legitimate theatre. In January 1871 he had rebuilt Bryan Hall as Hooley's Opera House, opening with a burlesque bill. The *Tribune* called it "a perfect bijou of a place, excellently adapted to minstrelsy," but that didn't save it when Mrs. O'Leary's cow got off that on-side kick with the lantern. Hooley promptly rebuilt across the street from the City Hall on Randolph Street and until 1924, when the house was swallowed up by the Sherman Hotel, it was Chicago's No. 1 legitimate theatre. From 1898 on it was known as The Powers, after Harry Powers, its business manager, who bought out Hooley in that year. Harry Powers, one of the greatest figures in Chicago theatrical history, also later owned the Blackstone, Illinois, and Iroquois theatres, and was a partner with A. L. Erlanger in the Erlanger. He and his partner, Will Davis, almost perished in the tragic fire that took hundreds of lives at the Iroquois during a Christmas week matinee in 1903.

But to get back to Hooley's. It was the fanciest thing to be seen in town since the Crosby Opera House, and its program urged the audience to "promenade during the intermission between the acts and view the Works of Art on either side of the Grand Foyer. The ladies are especially invited to seek this relief from the fatigue of long sitting." The playbill also advertised the Hartz Mountain canaries that Fred Kaempfer had for sale at 127 Clark Street, and Henrici's Hotel and Restaurant, "*das beste deutsche Gasthaus in Chicago.*" And it discreetly suggested that while the ladies were looking at the Works of Art in the Grand Foyer, the gentlemen might like to quaff some

F. J. Dewes lager in the Brunswick saloon next door. A seat in the parquette at Hooley's was only $1, a meal at Henrici's Gasthaus, cost only 50¢, and the F. J. Dewes lager was a nickel a glass.

All this and Ada Rehan, too! Those were the days.

The theatre got off to a late start in Chicago. In fact, there wasn't a single theatre in town until 1847, when Chicago's first real impresario, Mr. John B. Rice, built his sumptuous palace to Thespis at 33 W. Randolph Street, at the staggering cost of $4000. He called the new house The Chicago Theatre, but everybody else called it Rice's. It had a parquette, dress circle, and boxes, and Rice installed Chicago's first permanent stock company in it. St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati, which had had theatres for years, sniffed contemptuously, but Chicago was proud of Rice's. As previously noted, Rice's burned down during a performance of Bellini's *Sonnambula* in 1850.

The first performance of any kind where an admission fee was charged in Chicago took place on February 24, 1833, when a Mr. Bowers gave an "exhibition" at Dexter Graves's Mansion House on West Lake Street. Mr. Bowers presented a program of "Magic, Ventriloquism, and Stunts," and then dropped out of sight. The next theatrical venture in town was in the dining room of a hotel called The Traveler's Home, and the program was the same as that presented by Bowers but with the addition of "songs and funny sayings." This rich feast evidently satisfied the town's appetite for culture until 1837, when two actors by the names of Harry Isherwood and Alex McKinzie made a theatre out of the dining room of the Sauganash Hotel, haggled with the city fathers over a proper license fee (finally settling for $125), and presented a brief season of stock. There were five men and three women in this company, including Joe Jefferson's sister Hetty, and they opened on Monday, Oct. 23, 1837, with James Sheridan Knowles's *The Hunchback*. Ad-

mission was 75¢. After the "season" (about four weeks) was over, the company went "on tour" to Galena, Alton, and points south.

In 1838, however, Isherwood and McKinzie were back with great plans. They rented the third floor of a building on Lake Street and redecorated it as a theatre with a line of makeshift boxes up front and several tiers of circus seats in the rear. The room was 30 feet wide and eighty feet long, and the two entrepreneurs had the gall to call it The Chicago Theatre. They opened on May 10, 1838, with Kotzebue's ever-popular *The Stranger*, and by now the company had acquired a distinct asset in Joe Jefferson II, who had given up managing a vaudeville company at Niblo's in New York to play with his brother-in-law's group.

Up until the time that Rice's was built, this haphazard room on Lake Street was all the theatre Chicago had. The City Saloon on Lake east of Clark began presenting an occasional theatrical attraction in 1836—things like the "Annual Entertainment by The Inmates of the Indiana Deaf and Dumb Asylum," and the Druid Horn Players—"Fascinating Musical Numbers Played on Ox Horns." Then there was something called The Theatre on Randolph near LaSalle which couldn't be bothered getting a license and so was closed after Mary Duff Porter had appeared there in *The Stranger*, *A Day in Paris*, and *A Manager in Distress*. This latter was very appropriate under the circumstances.

After such meagre fare, the enthusiasm of mud-locked but growing Chicago for Rice's is understandable. Moreover, Rice came up with a very good stock company, headed by the popular author and actor, Dan Marble. The most distinguished member of the cast was Mrs. Henry Hunt, who had formerly been Mrs. John Drew, wife of the Irish comedian, and who is the grandmother of Lionel, Ethel, and John Barrymore. Mrs. Hunt and Mr. Marble opened in *Four Sisters* on June 28, 1847, and were followed by T. D. Rice, the negro minstrel-man, with

his hilarious delineation of the characters Jump Jim Crow and Jumbo Jum. One of the minor members of the company at this time was James H. McVicker, who did low-comedy parts and doubled as stagemanager.

The theatre in those days was not the instrument of polished deception that it is today, and considerable imagination was required on the part of the audience. Rice's, for instance, had no loft, and whenever snow was required, as it often was for the lurid melodramas of that day, it was furnished by a prop man hoisted aloft with a block and tackle who dispensed it from a burlap bag with his hands, flinging it down from a point just beyond the view of the audience. One night at Rice's the block and tackle slipped, and the prop man, carefully aiming his snow at the "misery cloak" of the poor more-to-be-pitied-than-censured heroine, was slowly lowered (all unbeknownst to himself) to the place where he was in full view of everybody in the theatre. It was characteristic of the time that both audience and cast ignored this visitation from on high.

It was John B. Rice who brought the first guest star to Chicago. On the night of June 8, 1848, the distinguished Edwin Forrest opened in *Othello*. It was the biggest event in Chicago's theatrical history up to that time. Forrest followed *Othello* with *Hamlet*. Shortly thereafter Rice brought in Junius Brutus Booth to star in *Richard III*.

After Rice's first theatre burned down in 1850, the enterprising James H. McVicker struck out on his own and in 1857 he opened a theatre, magnificent for its day, on the site of the present McVickers, on Madison near State. It cost $85,000, and enabled McVicker to dominate the theatrical life of Chicago until the Fire of '71 wiped out every theatre in town except the little Globe on Desplaines Street. McVicker's stock company, headed by David Hanchett, really wasn't as good as the one Rice had installed in his rebuilt theatre, but the modernity of the McVickers Theatre and the richness of its appointments

enabled it to outdraw Rice's. By 1858 Rice's was closed; another small theatre, North's, was used only occasionally, and, except for the numerous halls around town (Metropolitan, Kingsbury, Canterbury, etc.) the McVickers had the field all to itself. Edwin Booth made his first Chicago appearance at McVickers as Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* in 1858, and in 1862 John Wilkes Booth appeared there in *Richard III.*

During and immediately after the Civil War, theatres sprouted like mushrooms. The New Opera House (later to be known as The Academy of Music and The Arlington) was erected on the north side of Washington Street between Clark and Dearborn in 1863; Woods' Museum went up on Randolph Street in 1864; the Dearborn (formerly known as The Varieties) was redecorated and opened on Dearborn between Washington and Madison in 1868. Crosby's Opera House, the $600,000 white elephant, was built in 1865. The Globe on Desplaines, presenting the amateur productions of the Chicago Amateur Dramatic Society, was erected in 1870, and Hooley's Opera House was metamorphosed out of old Bryan Hall on North Clark in 1871—just in time for the Fire.

Of all these, only Woods' Museum was able to offer any real competition to the McVickers. The Museum had been built by a character named Colonel Woods, the P. T. Barnum of Chicago. It had a wax museum and freak exhibition in the "museum," for which one admission was paid. Then, by paying another admission, the museum patron could gain admittance to the Lecture Hall in back of the museum. Here, in semi-secrecy, "play-acting" was indulged in. The idea, which Col. Woods had brought to Chicago from the East, was that while museums were educational, "play-acting" was sinful. Nobody objected to being seen entering a museum, but decent people did not like to be observed entering a theatre. So Woods let the customers enter the museum first and then, if they were so

minded, they could pay another admission to the Lecture Hall and eat of the forbidden fruit of the theatre. In 1864 Woods threw caution to the winds and boldly announced that the Lecture Hall would be tenanted by a stock company which would be so good it would drive McVicker's company right into the Lake. His star was John Dillon, a popular comedian of the day who was a very good actor when he was sober but who was not sober very often. Second roles in the Woods' company were played by Frank Aiken, a good, sober actor. The Woods opened on Tuesday evening, March 24, 1864, with Dillon starring in Tom Taylor's *Ticket of Leave Man.* McVicker put on the same show on the same night just to show up Woods, but Dillon was sober that night and it was McVicker who was shown up. Later the Woods company put on the first performance of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room,* with Frank Aiken as Joe Morgan and Dillon as Sample Switchell.

After the Fire, Hooley, Rice, and McVicker promptly built new theatres; the Grand Opera House went up on Clark Street, the Schiller on Randolph between Clark and Dearborn. The Chicago Opera House, the Alhambra, the Gaiety, Havertys, the Great Northern, The Dearborn, the Garrick, the Illinois, and the Studebaker all rose, one after the other. Great days were envisaged; Balaban and Katz hadn't been born and Hollywood was a hilly chunk of unpleasant wilderness.

The great days came, too—the Gay 90's, the Golden Age of the Chicago Theatre. *Charlie's Aunt* cavorted about the stage of Hooley's; Sol Smith Russell, Otis Skinner, and Richard Mansfield graced the boards at the Grand Opera House; Beerbohm Tree and the London Haymarket Company presented Shakespeare and Ibsen at the Chicago Opera House; Henry B. Clifford's Gaiety Burlesque Company convulsed the town with *Little Miss Chicago* at the Gaiety; John Kernell played McSweeney in *The Irish Alderman* at the Alhambra; David Belasco offered Mrs. Leslie Carter in *The Heart of Maryland* at the

Great Northern. As the new century began William Farnum, only a step away from fame and fortune in films, played *Ben Hur* at the Illinois, to be followed by the Floradora Girls, and E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe starred in *Hamlet* at the Garrick.

It was quite a period, the Gay 90's, in Chicago. Up on Addison Street a big-eyed little Swedish girl by the name of Gloria Swanson was growing up; Lillian Russell was the toast of half the world and her beauty was a byword wherever the male of the species gathered, but there were many who remembered when she was just little Helen Leonard at the Skinner Public School in Chicago; Adelaide Neilsen, the actress, was considered by many to be the peer of Lillian as far as beauty was concerned, and Chicago even in the Victorian Gay 90's was not too shocked to observe that the lovely Adelaide bestowed her favors freely on men who were nice to her.

It must be admitted that there was a slightly rowdy tinge to the theatre in Chicago in the years between the Fire and the turn of the century, a circumstance that should surprise no one, for Chicago was a rowdy town. After the Fire, the ruins of Hooley's Opera House on Clark Street were reconstructed into Foley's Billiard Hall, which, with thirty tables, proclaimed itself "the largest in the world." In 1874, Foley's was taken over by the Wizard Oil quack, John A. Hamlin, who renamed it The Coliseum. The Coliseum was an indoor beer garden which presented variety and minstrels on stage and a bevy of blondes in the balcony; the latter occupied their time making dates with the young bloods seated at the tables below. This happenstance caused The Coliseum to be known around town as The Call-and-See-'Em. The Lyceum, a dingy little theatre on Desplaines Street, presented such attractions as Madame Duclos and her lady minstrels. The chief forte of these ladies was ribaldry, *double-entendre*, and as much of a flesh display as the police would tolerate. Indeed, the Madame so irritated the elderly

Wilbur F. "Old" Storey of the *Times* that he referred to her in his paper as "Madame No-clos." But Chicago liked her, one of her fans being Carter Harrison II, soon to be one of Chicago's most popular mayors. At Rice's theatre (known as the Columbia at this time) the Camille D'Orville Comic Opera Company, "80 Artists From New York," put on such delightfully daring presentations as *Prince Kam, or A Trip To Venus*, with Prince Kam's Art Gallery, "Introducing Living Pictures by the Kilanyi Troupe," posing between the acts for such pictures as "Venus of Milo," "Ariadne," "Psyche at the Well," "Springtime," "The Daughter of the Sheik," and "Aphrodite." These "living pictures" would be tame today, but in the Nineties they were as close as the public could get to undraped femininity without venturing into the purlieus of South Clark Street or braving the stench of the degenerate little halls on South State.

As the early years of the 20th century wore on, the Golden Age of the Chicago theatre began to merge into the Golden Age of Chicago art and letters, the period between 1912 and 1925. The movies began taking over the legitimate theatres, but the "little theatre" movement boomed in a town that had poets and playwrights like Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, and producers like Maurice Browne. Browne and Ellen Van Falkenburg had the world's biggest little theatre in the Fine Arts Building, and from this vantage point they hurled Ibsen and Pinero at the citizenry. Jules Goodman had a little theatre down on Cottage Grove Avenue, and presented one-acters by Ben Hecht and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman. There was another little theatre on North Avenue where Carl Sandburg used to recite his poems to banjo accompaniment and where Alfred Kreymborg played his own musical compositions on the mandolute. Rose Caylor, now Ben Hecht's wife, appeared in *Dope* and other plays in the North Avenue house. Hecht and Sherwood Anderson wrote a play called *Benvenuto Cellini* which all the little theatres in town put on. Out at Hull

House, Laura Dainty Pelham had discovered a promising youngster named Paul Muni.

Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, a promising playwright, was killed in World War I and his parents gave the Goodman Memorial Theatre to the Art Institute in his memory. This is a little jewel of a house, seating 742, and equipped with all the most modern devices of stagecraft. The lighting system was installed by George Izenour in 1949 at a cost of $45,000; it gives the little Goodman one of the finest lighting systems in the world. Today the Art Institute's School of the Drama, with 180 students, uses the Goodman Theatre as a laboratory, presenting such plays as Jean Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine.* Ralph Alswang, the well-known New York stage designer who designed the sensational sets for the New Stage's *Blood Wedding*, is a graduate of the Goodman Theatre.

Theatrically, Chicago was a cocky town up to about 1925. It didn't consider itself "the road." It had its own producing companies and its own favorite actors: Walker Whiteside was one of the finest Shakespearean actors in the world, yet he never played east of Cleveland in his life. When Burton Rascoe was drama critic for the *Tribune* in '17, '18, and '19, he sometimes had to cover as many as six openings a week. In those days Chicago was almost as important a producing center as New York.

Burt himself was of the opinion that there was no producer in New York, nor any three producers, who could turn out as many good musicals as Mort Singer could in his Princess Theatre on South Clark Street.[1] When Mort and his assistant, Frank Adams, summoned Franz Lehar from Vienna to do a score for a show they were producing, Lehar didn't even stop over in New York long enough to say hello. Mort put on *The Golden Girl, Prince of Tonight*, and *The Goddess of Liberty*, among others. The latter was not an unqualified success, however; the

1. Burton Rascoe, "Rosemary For The Rialto," *Theatre Arts*, July, 1951.

feminine lead showed up pie-eyed on opening night, got the staggers, fell into a wing, knocked it over, and brought the whole stage set crumbling down about her ears. It was funny, but it wasn't in the script.

The theatre that came from New York, like the literature that came from New York, had small standing in Chicago eyes. The Chicago little-theatre people looked on New York much as New York today looks upon Hollywood—as the spawning ground for semi-literate commercialism. "Theatrically and journalistically we were a land-locked town," says Ben Hecht, "no more touched by the glamor of Broadway than by the glories of Nineveh."[2]

The theatre that came from Broadway, however, did all right in Chicago. The great Ziegfeld Follies came to the Iroquois on Randolph Street, with Fanny Brice, Ann Pennington, Helen Morgan, Bert Williams, W. C. Fields, Ed Wynn, Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, Billie Burke, Gilda Gray, Marilyn Miller, and Jack Donohue. Al Jolson brought *Honeymoon Express* to the Iroquois, also *Robinson Crusoe* and *Sinbad*. Raymond Hitchcock and Ray Dooley were seen in the rib-splitting *Hitchy-Koo*. Laurette Taylor, in *Peg O' My Heart*, Margaret Mayo in *Polly of the Circus*, Doris Keane in *Romance*, Bill Faversham in *The Great Divide*, and John Barrymore in *The Farewell Supper* from Schnitzler's *Affairs of Anatole*—these were the stars and the plays that delighted the Chicagoans of the second decade of the 20th century.

And what critics the town had in those days! Ashton Stevens, Percy Hammond, Amy Leslie, Charles Collins, O. L. Hall. And to pinch-hit there were Fred Donaghey, Shepherd Butler, Lloyd Lewis, and Richard Henry Little.

Even the worst of them, Ben Hecht thought, was a delight to read. The worst was Amy Leslie, who "wrote as if smothered in the mantle of Ouida." She had a girlish mind and wrote in

2. Ben Hecht, "Wistfully Yours," *Theatre Arts*, July, 1951.

rhapsodies; "no drama critic I have read since, not even Alex Woollcott, could swoon as madly in front of the footlights as our Amy Leslie," opined Ben.[3]

The greatest of them all, of course, and one of the greatest this country has produced, was Ashton Stevens. Ashton Stevens, who was to devote 58 of his 80 years to theatrical reporting, met William Randolph Hearst on a San Francisco-Oakland ferryboat one day and shortly thereafter went to work on Hearst's San Francisco *Examiner*. Previously he had succeeded Ambrose Bierce as drama critic on the San Francisco *News-Letter*, and had also replaced Bret Harte as editor of *The Overland Monthly*. But from 1898 on, Stevens worked for the Hearst papers in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. He came to the Chicago *Examiner* in 1910 and remained with the Hearst papers in Chicago until his death a year or so ago.

Ashton Stevens was a stylist—"as fastidious a writer as Saki," Ben Hecht thought.[4] He was sprightly and full of good manners, "one of that rare tribe of witty men that the French once produced—de Gourmont and Anatole France—who found more pleasure in using their wit to brighten praise than to sharpen malice." But he could decapitate you with a phrase, and he was generally and apprehensively known throughout the acting profession as "the mercy killer." He used the rapier on so many Erlanger productions that Erlanger complained, grudgingly admitting, however, that "he's another S.O.B. but he believes what he writes."[5] He feuded with Richard Mansfield, once asking that renowned thespian if he intended to include Shaw's *Arms and the Man* in his repertory. "If I did," retorted Mansfield, "I'm afraid you wouldn't understand it." "Oh!" said Ashton suavely, "I had hoped your diction had improved." On another occasion a solicitous theatre manager asked Stevens

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Bill Doll, "Ashton Stevens," *Theatre Arts*, July, 1951.

if the seat he had been given was satisfactory. "No," said Ashton, "I can not only see, but I can hear every word." When a gangster was shot as he was leaving the theatre one evening, Ashton headed his review of the attraction playing the theatre: "They shot the wrong man." The Stevens motto was: "To be right if possible, to be read if possibler." He was read, and feared, and loved.

The theatre may be dead in Chicago today, and its epitaph may well be, as many allege, "murdered by the movies." But it has one of the liveliest pallbearers anybody ever heard of in Claudia Cassidy, the wise and waspish drama, music, and dance critic of the *Tribune*. Claudia, a good-looking, fiftyish lady, makes strong men tremble when she sits down at what many claim to be a poison typewriter. Richard Gehman, who knows his theatre, calls her the "Medusa of the Midwest" and says she's "one of the five most perceptive, informed, and scholarly critics in American journalism."[6] Claudia has been a working newspaperwoman in Chicago for twenty-five years, and her columns in the *Tribune* sometimes pull as many as 2000 letters a day. But she's devilishly hard to please, and many say that she hasn't been impressed by any Chicago spectacle since the Fire. Gehman observes that "no other professional playgoer in the country, with the possible exception of Wolcott Gibbs of *The New Yorker*, is so cordially loathed by so many members of the acting profession."[7] (It would be interesting to hear what Claudia has to say about Mr. Gehman!)

Here are some typical Cassidyisms:

On Margaret Phillips, in *Summer and Smoke:* "My own conviction is that she seriously weakens an already unstable play . . . an actress of singularly limited range and almost no perceptible depth."

On *The Respectful Prostitute* and *Hope Is The Thing With*

6. Richard B. Gehman, "Medusa of the Midwest," *Theatre Arts*, July, 1951.
7. *Ibid.*

Feathers: "Both productions seem to have been thrown together on the train."

On Rudolph Bing: "No wonder Rudolph Bing has a look of sardonic amusement. . . . He turned the bubbling froth of *Fledermaus* into a mixture of corn likker and stale beer."

On *Borscht Capades:* "Just about what I thought it would be, a fugitive from the subway circuit, given uncommonly luxurious haven by a desperate theatre that would have to double the order for moth balls if it went much longer without a booking."

Such animadversions as the above raise the hackles of sensitive performers. Cornelia Otis Skinner, a Chicago girl herself, says Claudia is guilty of "pure bitchery." Marie Powers, after La Cassidy panned *The Medium*, went looking for the *Tribune* critic with mayhem in her eye, but was lured away from the target by Seymour Raven, the paper's No. 2 drama desker, who rushed Powers off to lunch before she could operate on the Cassidy face.

But some performers, like Tallulah Bankhead, are able to take Claudia for what she is. They know she calls 'em as she sees 'em. When *Private Lives* opened in Chicago, Tallu said to Claudia (who looks like her): "When you wrote about *The Little Foxes* I said O God, I wish she was on that big paper (at that time Claudia was reviewing for the *Sun-Times*), but when I saw what you said about *Private Lives* I said O God, I wish she was back on that little one."[8]

Claudia's most energetic feud recently was with Rafael Kubelik, Director of the Chicago Symphony. Kubelik is very well thought of abroad, and some Chicago critics, like the *Sun-Times's* Felix Borowski, also think well of him. But Claudia didn't think he was good enough for Chicago, and she let Kubelik and Chicago know it. Commenting on a performance of the orchestra recently, she observed acidly that: "It's hard

8. Richard Gehman, "Medusa of the Midwest."

to see how you can make this music boring, but Kubelik does it."

Poor Kubelik—he fled Stalin, only to find himself in the toils of Cassidy. But deliverance was in sight—Fritz Reiner succeeded him as director for the 1953-1954 season.

A good deal of Claudia's asperity grows out of her love for Chicago and her remembrance of the time of the city's greatness. She is a perfectionist, and she will not accept the second-best. Road companies of Broadway shows, understudies elevated to stardom for the Chicago run, second-rate performances by allegedly first-rate performers just because they are off Broadway—these things infuriate Cassidy. To her, Chicago is a first-class town that deserves nothing but first-class entertainment. So, when she is exposed to a performance that is only a shade off the New York standard, she lets everybody concerned have both barrels.

If the movies have murdered the legitimate theatre in Chicago, then the town itself will have to assume some of the blame, because Chicago nurtured this tiger when it was just a cute little kitten. Not many people are around who still remember it, but in its infancy Chicago was the capital of the film industry. Before there was any Hollywood, such stars as Gloria Swanson, Wallace Beery, W. C. Fields, and Francis X. Bushman were toiling in the old Essanay Studios on Argyle Street, the same studios that are now occupied by Wilding Pictures Corporation, makers of documentary and business films. Here, back in those days, came young Louella Parsons from downstate Illinois, to do press-agenting and script-writing, and to try to conceal Francis X. Bushman's five lively children from the gaze of his palpitating female public. There was an office boy on the Essanay lot in those days who was cross-eyed and middle-aged; he was so bashful that everybody felt sorry for him. Finally, just to be nice, some kind director stuck him in a picture. Then everybody stopped feeling sorry for him, because he was soon

making more money than all the rest of them put together. His name was Ben Turpin.

Louella had her troubles. She bought a script once from a pleasant little old lady up on the North Shore, and just when the shooting was proceeding nicely, it was discovered that the pleasant little old lady had sold the identical script to Vitagraph, where the shooting was going even better. Shortly thereafter, exit Louella. But she landed right side up, initiating the world's first movie column in the Chicago *Record-Herald*. She got $45 a week for it.

The movies soon packed up and departed for the Golden Shore, taking Louella with them. Shortly after arriving there they turned and took a large bite out of the kindly hand that had fed them; many of Chicago's legitimate theatres were transformed into movie houses, and the process of turning a great theatre town into just another stop on the road began.

When radio came along, Chicago's talent for innovation again made itself felt. New York radio couldn't break loose from the pattern of plays written for the stage, and Hollywood radio was firmly wedded to the screen script. But in Chicago, where there were no big executive brains and very little money, experimentation was the order of the day. A new art form came into being in the Windy City—a dramatic play written especially for radio. Radio drama actually began at midnight in the middle '30's, on one of the upper floors of the Merchandise Mart. Its father was Willy Cooper; it was the "First Nighter" series, starring Don Ameche. Chicago radio writers (may God forgive them) also initiated the soap opera, or daytime dramatic serial, and Chicago became the training ground for aspiring radio actors and actresses: Mercedes McCambridge, Betty Winkler, Ann Shepherd, Betty Cain, Joan Blaine, Ann Seymour, Betty Lou Gerson, Virginia Clark, Templeton Fox, Bess Johnson, Don Ameche, Les Tremayne, Harold Peary, Ken Griffin. Arch Oboler came to Chicago to originate some of

his best dramatic shows. Chicago radio stood for freshness, originality, experimentation, youth, and a low budget. The informal kaffee-klatsch type show also originated in Chicago with Ransom Sherman, Pat Barnes, East and Dumke, and Don McNeill's "Breakfast Club."

Of course, when the agency bigwigs in New York and Hollywood saw what was happening, they put a stop to it, just as they later did to Chicago television. They put a stop to it by buying it up and moving it out, and, having moved it, forced it to conform to the preconceptions of the two coasts. In Chicago, actors, writers, and producers had been trying to please the public. In New York and Hollywood, they were told to ignore the public and limit themselves to trying to please the big advertisers.

When television came along, the same thing happened all over again. Only five per cent of television's network total originated in Chicago, but that five per cent was tops in ingenuity, charm, and distinctive showmanship, according to the syndicated radio and tv columnist, Harriet Van Horne.[9] As in radio, Chicago was forced into innovation by low budgets. But local continuity writers like Charlie Andrews, producers like Ted Mills, and directors like Bill Hobin, made up in ingenuity what they lacked in money. They "used the TV cameras the way an artist uses the brush."[10] They let the cameras "glide, spring, and swoop." They (the cameras) surveyed the scene with sly winks, wide-eyed surprise, and trembling awareness. People in the trade were quick to say that the Chicago touch was to TV what the French touch was to cooking. There weren't any big names in Chicago TV as there were in New York and Hollywood, so Chicago emphasized the *show* rather than the performer.

Fred Allen, the celebrated comedian, attributes his own

9. Harriet Van Horne, *Theatre Arts*, July, 1951.
10. *Ibid.*

failure in the new medium to the fact that he didn't obey his first impulse and put on his show from Chicago. "They ought to tear down Radio City, rebuild it in Chicago, and call it TV Town," says Fred.[11]

The three outstanding examples of Chicago-style television were the "Kukla, Fran and Ollie" puppet show, Burr Tillstrom's very clever and adult children's program; "Garroway at Large," an informal Sunday-evening variety show emceed by the erudite Dave Garroway; and "Stud's Place," the Studs Terkel weekly serial about a pleasant Chicago saloon.

All three shows were touched with genius. Burr's characters, like Beulah Witch (a graduate of Witch Normal who flies on a broomstick equipped with radar), Fletcher Rabbit (who starches his ears and collects guppies) and Ollie (a genial dragon who reads such books as *10,000 Things a Boy Can Build*) insinuated themselves charmingly into the lives of millions of Americans. Garroway "made Milton Berle and his brethren absolutely unbearable," according to Harriet Van Horne. Studs crossed up the Big Brains of The Industry by having Phil Lord, an old-time actor, play the part of Phil Lord, an old-time actor; Chet Roble, a jazz pianist, play the part of a jazz pianist; and Win Stracke, a folk-singer, play the role of a folk-singer. It was unheard of! But it emerged on the TV screen as pretty wonderful magic.

The past tense is used here in spite of the fact that Tillstrom, Garroway, and Terkel are all still very much in the present and can still be seen on your TV screen. The wheels in Radio City started turning, and Chicago television went the way of Chicago radio. They (the demonic, impersonal "they" that characterizes all evil) told Tillstrom the advertisers didn't care too much for his show, even if it was pulling 6000-8000 letters a week. So they cut it from a half hour a day to fifteen minutes, and schemed further decimation. They ditched "Garroway

11. *Ibid.*

at Large" completely, yanked poor Dave out of Chicago, and installed him as a combination disc jockey and weather forecaster on a 7 A.M., three-hour bore from mid-Manhattan. "Stud's Place" they took off the network altogether, but it can still be seen locally in Chicago, at least at this writing.

So far "they" haven't got around to interfering with some of the lesser examples of Chicago television: "Zoo Parade," with Marlin Perkins of the Lincoln Park Zoo showing off reptiles with the air of a man giving an exhibition of rare paintings; "Hawkins Falls," a daytime serial, and "Mr. Wizard," a children's science show. But if they run true to form we can confidently expect The Executives to get together with The Agency Men and summon Perkins to New York to broadcast the Dodger games for some beer company, while dispatching Mr. Wizard to Hollywood to understudy Groucho Marx.

But it may be that Chicago television will survive all this. Harriet Van Horne, a very perspicacious female, says that:

> All in all, Chicago has the ingenuity, the daring, and the taste that will save TV from the terrible fate that has been Hollywood's. If the day ever comes when TV establishes a true academy, a place where the young and hopeful may go to learn the art of TV programming, Chicago is the only conceivable place for such an institution.[12]

And (tell it not in Gath) there is a possibility that television may revenge Hollywood's slaying of the Chicago theatre. Already there is talk of scraping the chewing gum off the seats, throwing the popcorn machines in the alley, and reconverting some of Chicago's old theatres from the movies to live shows. Mr. Balaban and Mr. Katz are worried because the public is staying home and watching TV these days and nights.

Let 'em worry.

12. *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, as of this writing, the corpse is showing some faint signs of life. Five of Chicago's legitimate theatres are tenanted, and by first class attractions. And up in Evanston a new Equity stock venture called the Showcase Theatre is prospering, presenting plays completely new to Chicago, with the local company beefed out with Broadway and Hollywood names in the lead roles. Hope Summers, founder, producer, and manager of the Showcase Theatre, hopes that the Evanston house will be a tryout theatre where new and experimental plays can be tested for eventual full-scale Broadway production. A training school for young actors and actresses is operated in connection with the house, and the future looks promising. Claudia, put away that snickersee!

But oh for the days of Hooley's, and Haverty's; the 50¢ meals at Henrici's, and the 5¢ a glass Dewes lager! As Joe Jefferson used to say so movingly: "How zoon ve are forgotten ven ve are gone."

EARLY IN 1907 *I said to Henry Fuller, Lorado Taft, Charles Francis Browne and Ralph Clarkson, "If you will aid me I will undertake to organize here in Chicago a club similar to the Players, composed of artists, writers, and musicians. . . ."*—HAMLIN GARLAND.

Chapter X

The Cliff-Dwellers

HIGH ATOP Orchestra Hall and commanding a magnificent vista of the lake, Grant Park, and Michigan Avenue, is a long, low, lovely room, open-raftered and with a fireplace at one end. Its walls are lined with books, many of them written by the men who lounge in the deep leather chairs before the fire. There is a grand piano in one corner of the room, and the fingers of most of the world's great pianists have run along its keyboard. Between the books that line the walls paintings are hung—original paintings, for this room is the habitat of artists. And there are magazines—all sorts of magazines—and good food, and good talk in this room. In the midst of the crashing commercialism and savage bustle of Chicago's downtown district, this place is a quiet and refreshing oasis. It is the Cliff-Dwellers Club, and one is as surprised at finding it in hog-butcher Chicago as one would be at coming on Marilyn Monroe in a plastic surgeon's office.

Oddly enough, this club for Chicago's "artistic men" was the product of the thinking and work of two men neither of whom had any very organic connection with Chicago's literary life, Hamlin Garland and Henry B. Fuller. Garland, a *Son of the Middle Border,* was a famous writer who, in spite of his

frontier-life themes, spelled Art with a capital *A*. His principal interest in Chicago was Zulene Taft, Lorado's sister, whom he married in 1907. Outside of Zulene and a few others, he thought Chicago inhabited by savages. He was something of a personal ascetic—the last man you would think of in connection with a convivial group such as the Cliff-Dwellers later became—but he had a lot of drive, and when the idea for a club for "artistic men" hit him he did something about it.

Henry B. Fuller was Garland's bosom friend and confidant, and he also spelled Art with a capital *A*. A sensitive esthete who was never fully appreciated, he worked closely with Harriet Monroe and Ralph Fletcher Seymour in getting out *Poetry*, but he, like Garland, felt very much out of place in uncouth Chicago. He had written a novel called *The Cliff-Dwellers*, and Garland promptly appropriated it as a name for the new club. Perverse as always, Fuller refused to join.

Garland, however, got the club going without him. He, Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, Ralph Clarkson, Clarence Dickinson, Alfred Granger, I. K. and A. B. Pond, Howard Shaw, and Charles Hutchinson signed the incorporation application. It was to be a club for artists, musicians, architects, writers, and "men who were interested in art but did not produce it professionally." In other words, business men. These latter, Charles Hutchinson used to say, were the "lay members"—the geese that laid the golden eggs. Without them, at first, there would have been no club. But with them, it was possible to go ahead and build the beautiful room atop Orchestra Hall. The Club moved into its permanent quarters in 1909 and has been there ever since.

For seven long years Garland was president of the Club, pouring a great deal of energy into it and stamping it with his own mental and moral outlook on life. He was something of a trial to the free spirits among the membership, with his heavy-handed disapproval of Bacchus and Lady Nicotine, and when

he finally removed to the more rarefied climate of New York there was a great deal of quiet rejoicing.

And some that wasn't so quiet. A portrait of Garland, beautifully done by Ralph Clarkson, was hung in the place of honor at one end of the club-room. A farewell dinner was arranged, but at the last minute Garland couldn't make it. As a result, a few changes were made in the program. A bar was rigged up below the portrait and red-faced Roswell Field installed behind it as bartender. The portrait was then turned to the wall and a large sign draped across it reading: "THIS PLACE HAS CHANGED HANDS."

The Pullman Building was located next door to Orchestra Hall, and in the early days of the Club the Hieronymus Restaurant on the top floor of that edifice supplied food and drink to Club members via a doorway that was especially cut between the two buildings. Mr. Hieronymus, however, grew impatient over the fact that the Cliff-Dwellers didn't buy liquor in the tremendous amounts he had anticipated from "bohemians." Indeed, said Mr. Hieronymus, the only member who had a respectable liquor bill at all was the gentlest, most quiet, and most inassertive of all the Cliff-Dwellers, William Morton Paine. So Mr. Hieronymus sealed up the door that had been cut through and the Club was forced to put in its own kitchen and install a suitable staff, which it did.

As for the gentle Mr. Paine, he was responsible for one of the finest memorial dinners in the history of Chicago. He ate at the Club every night, always occupying the same place at the table. He was a frail wraith of a man who always had a glass of the best bourbon before his meal, and when Prohibition loomed on the horizon he went to his doctor and asked for an opinion as to his life expectancy. After getting it, he bought a supply of bourbon calculated to provide him with that before-dinner drink for the rest of his life, and stored it in the club kitchen. But the doctor had overestimated Mr. Paine's strength,

and he departed this life considerably ahead of schedule. Whereupon a memorial dinner was given in his honor at the Club, with a wreath on the empty chair he had occupied for so many years. Before each Club member was placed a glass similar to the one Paine had used; his store of bourbon was brought from the kitchen and ceremoniously opened; the glasses were filled and as each man drank he turned towards the empty chair, downed his drink, and said solemnly, "Here's to you, William." There was enough of Paine's bourbon for quite a few rounds.

One of the great occasions of the Club year is the annual harvest home dinner. The ladies are invited to this seasonal bacchanal, which features a special libation known as the Bissell Sweeper, the ingredients of which are kept a secret. Following the ceremonial downing of this lethal concoction, members and guests are treated to a grand processional by the members of the kitchen staff, brandishing knives and cleavers, and carrying proudly aloft a succulent roast pig with an apple in its mouth.

Like all organizations of artists, writers, and such-like, the Club has a fine appreciation of the female of the species. On one occasion when a brand new and very elegant steak-wagon was dedicated, the wagon turned out to contain not steak but the ravishing Ann Pennington, very much in the flesh and with not too much over the flesh.

Until recently another much-anticipated annual event was the yearly Dunes Barbecue, usually staged on the sand dunes near Michigan City, Indiana. On the midnight preceding the barbecue the head chef at the Club and his corps of assistants would arrive at the site, dig the barbecue pit, erect the necessary tables and tents, cut enormous amounts of firewood, anchor beer barrels firmly in the sand, and prepare gargantuan stacks of steak, chicken, potatoes, salads, and other delicacies. Around 2 P.M. the Cliff-Dwellers and their friends would begin to

arrive via train, bus, and private car; the beer would flow; the annual ball game would be played; hikes would be undertaken; swimming engaged in. Then would follow the feast—and the entertainment.

This latter was the principal attraction of the barbecue. Each year the entertainment would be in the hands of a different committee, which would strive to outdo all predecessors in originality. On one occasion the entertainment was entrusted to the fertile if somewhat unconventional minds of Ralph Fletcher Seymour and Charlie Tallmadge, the artist. They filled eight sacks with small squares of colored paper, and with them marked off eight different trails which led off into the dunes and the woods and at the end of which were various treasures. The most valuable of these treasures was to be auctioned off, when found, to the highest bidder. Most of the treasures were bottles of Scotch, boxes of cigars, etc., but the *pièce de résistance*, the "most valuable" treasure, was contained in a corrugated paper carton 6 feet long and 2 feet square, which was half-buried in the sand at the top of a dune quite near the barbecue site, although the trail that led to it twisted and turned circuitously through woods, brambles, and sand for a considerable length. In the box was one of the youngest, prettiest, nudest professional artist's models in Chicago. She wore only slippers, a girdle, and a wreath of flowers in her hair. After the box had been partially buried what remained above the sand was covered with juniper boughs and the fair occupant admonished to lie perfectly still until she should be officially discovered.

But the best-laid plans, etc., etc. Two elderly, chronically-fatigued Cliff-Dwellers painfully ascended this particular dune in search of an afternoon breeze and sat themselves down on the box containing the treasure. The treasure had not been briefed as to what she should do if two old men sat on her stomach, so she did what any woman would do—she screamed.

The elderly Cliff-Dwellers forgot their years and infirmities and high-tailed it down the dune; Tallmadge and Seymour, sensing what had happened, high-tailed it up to pacify their tearful, sat-upon treasure, and induce her to re-enter the box and await further developments. Finally the Cliff-Dwellers who had been on the trail located the box and dragged it down the hill to the camp, wondering what could be in it to make it so heavy. When they reached the bottom, the treasure broke faith again and popped screaming from the box; seems they had dragged her downhill headfirst and the weight of her body had pushed her head against the end of the box. She was finally caught, consoled, and induced once again to follow through on the Tallmadge-Seymour plan and permit herself to be auctioned off. Two young Cliff-Dwellers bid her in, pre-empted the car belonging to the father of one of them, and hurried off to town with the treasure, who by now didn't care if she never saw another artist, and especially another Cliff-Dweller, again in her life.

These annual Dunes Barbecues would end with a tremendous fire by the lake, with all of the Cliff-Dwellers doing a barbaric shuffle around it to the accompaniment of an Indian drum, chanting weird medleys and calling on the spirits of their dead Cliff-Dweller brothers to break sleep and dance with them.

As time went on and the members grew older, the Cliff-Dwellers tamed down somewhat and today the Club seldom engages in the kind of exuberant high jinks that marked its early years. Time has brought it the mellow and comfortable patina of respectability. Ashton Stevens used to say that anybody could tell it was an old club just by looking up its telephone number—Wabash Eighty-eighty.

On at least one memorable occasion, the Cliff-Dwellers' connection with the Indians of the Southwest became somewhat more than literary. The Club, in its ceremonial mumbo-jumbo, affected a relationship with the actual cliff-dwellers of

the mesas, and perhaps this was why two of the members, Carter Harrison II and Ralph Fletcher Seymour, decided to spend some time among the Southwestern aborigines. They made some friends among the bona fide cliff-dwellers and returned to Chicago full of indignation at the sad plight of the Hopis and Navajos, who were being harried by the federal government and whose water holes were being stolen by the Mexicans. But neither Our Carter nor Ralph were quite prepared for what happened shortly thereafter. One day Ralph's studio in the Fine Arts Building was suddenly invaded by twenty Indians in full regalia accompanied by a young man named John Collier, who then represented the Santa Fè Indian Welfare Society. They were on their way to Washington to remonstrate with the Great White Father because the Mexicans were still stealing their water holes. And, of course, they were broke. But they were confident that their Cliff-Dweller brothers in Chicago would succor them.

After allowing himself a brief period to recover from the shock of the unexpected visitation, Ralph Seymour conducted the Indians to the Cliff-Dwellers for lunch, blocking traffic in the streets and bringing curious throngs to office windows along the way. Pandemonium immediately ensued at Orchestra Hall, with porters, elevator men and other functionaries forsaking their posts to follow the Indians up to the Club rooms. At the Club itself the Cliff Dwellers who were quietly lunching there were thrown into a dither; it had never occurred to anybody that the "brothers" about whom they sang so lustily might actually appear in person someday, bringing with them the authentic flavor—"aroma" is a better word—of the Indian Southwest. But there they were, and they had to be fed. Food was produced; the guests fell upon it with guttural grunts of joy, scooping it up with their hands and distributing it over a wide area while the kitchen help peered at them apprehensively from behind doors. They gobbled and gabbed in Spanish and

Indian; word spread around the neighborhood that a full tribe of Hopis, complete with snakes, had invaded Orchestra Hall. Cab drivers, newspapermen, newsboys, and clerks jammed into the Club and clogged the stair wells to ogle the Indians.

After they had eaten, the Indians wiped their mouths on the backs of their hands and belched appreciatively. Someone produced a drum; the guests raised their voices in a mighty chant and stomped about the room in their Corn Dance. Tables and furniture went down, dishes crashed, artists, writers, musicians, and bankers jumped on chairs and howled excitedly. A newspaperman shot off a flash bulb; the Indians, under the impression that they were being attacked, milled about seeking cover.

John Collier finally succeeded in quieting his charges. Then he mounted a chair and made an appeal for money so that the group could go on to Washington. Seymour passed the hat; hundreds of dollars were dumped into it. The Indians, Seymour, and Collier became the most sought-after luncheon guests in Chicago; Seymour spoke over the radio from the *Daily News* station as an expert on Indian affairs; he and Harold Ickes undertook to house the Indians in their own homes, with the result that blanket-shrouded figures decorated the floors and hallways, to say nothing of the available beds, at the Ickes and Seymour *maisons* on the North Shore. Everybody wanted to give a reception for the Indians; they were the social darlings of the season. Finally they went their way to Washington and John Collier ultimately became U. S. Commissioner for Indian Affairs. Harold Ickes, oddly enough, later became Secretary of the Interior, with jurisdiction over Collier's bureau.

A good deal of Chicago's cultural history has been written in this relaxing room atop Orchestra Hall. Nearly all of the town's outstanding writers, musicians, architects, and artists have been affiliated with the club from 1909 to the present; visiting celebrities in the arts have been feted in the Club-room; one-man shows have been held here; memorable recitals given.

Much good conversation has flowed across the luncheon tables, many great plans have been hatched, many artistic reputations made and broken.

Today most of Chicago's literati are Cliff-Dwellers; so are its best artists and architects and musicians. And it still has the "geese that lay the golden eggs"—the "lay" members who, in Chicago more than anywhere else in the country, have exhibited an awareness of the fact that the making of money is not, in itself, the most desirable of ends.

From a chair on the terrace at the Cliff-Dwellers, surrounded by artists and such-like, with fragments of Margaret Anderson's "inspiring conversation" floating from the luncheon tables and the notes of the symphony concert coming up from the hall below, it is easy to think that one is in the midst of a midwestern cultural renaissance; easy to say, as Brigham Young did when he looked down the Wasatch towards the green plains by the Great Salt Lake, "This is the place."

. . . THE MEN WHO *came to the Onion River from New York and New England conquered the marsh and built a city. They and their sons brought together music and pictures and art . . . and if they fell short of the ideals of truth and justice somehow they kept seeking for beauty* . . . —EDGAR LEE MASTERS.

Chapter XI

The Big Wheels

"HUSTLERTOWN," as Nelson Algren calls Chicago, is a big place. It spreads out all over the prairie. It's a fitting monument to the hustlers, who were (and are) big men. Big physically, like Long John Wentworth, who stood six foot six and weighed 300 pounds. Big spiritually, like Julius Rosenwald, who gave away $63,000,000, mostly to the cause of Negro education. And big, too, in terms of vast and monumental skullduggery, like that which characterized Charles T. Yerkes and Samuel Insull.

It is just one more paradox in the midst of paradoxical Chicago that these hustlers, the bad as well as the good, wanted the town to be a cultural center and devoted most of their spare time—and some that wasn't so spare—to making it such. Between sessions of highjacking streetcar franchises and conniving with the "Gray Wolves" of the City Council, Charlie Yerkes found time to collect Botticellis and to give the Yerkes Observatory to the University of Chicago. Sam Insull spent at least as much time in trying to give Chicago first-class opera as he did in pyramiding his utility holding companies. And the terrible bulls and bears of the wheat pits—the Deerings, Hutch-

insons, and Palmers—spent almost as many hours sipping tea together as fellow board-members and trustees of the Art Institute, the University, and the Orchestra as they did in trying to bankrupt each other in LaSalle Street. With the blood and sweat of the arena still on them, they would pause together at the end of the week to sniff shyly at the little flowers of culture. Chicago's hustlers were as unlikely a lot of patrons of the arts as you would find in several months of Sundays. But then, isn't everything in Chicago unlikely?

And nothing more unlikely—or characteristic—than the story of Chicago's newest cultural suburb, Aspen. Aspen's in Colorado, more than a thousand miles from the corporate limits of Hustlertown, but it belongs to the city. A Chicago industrialist brought it into being, and University of Chicago brains transformed the half-abandoned old mining camp in the Colorado Rockies into one of the world's most important centers of learning.

In 1942 Aspen, Colorado was a picturesque little gingerbread ghost town near historic Leadville, crumbling genteelly to decay as the "color" in its mines ran out. But in that year the United States Army sent its newly-activated 10th Mountain Division to train at Camp Hale, near Leadville and only a good toboggan-slide from Aspen. It was inevitable that some of the troops, skiing over the mountainsides, should discover the Roaring Fork Valley with its seven peaks of more than 14,000 feet elevation.

Two of the soldiers who came upon Aspen in this way were Friedl Pfeifer, a sergeant in the 10th and former head instructor in the Sun Valley Ski School, and the renowned ski jumper Torger Tokle. Both got excited over the potentialities of Aspen as a skiing center, and were even more excited when they learned that Andre Roche, the Swiss ski expert, had marked a rough trail down the mountainside some years before. When Roche left town the local cobbler, Mike Magnifico, had cut

out the trail and erected a crude tow-lift. But the war moved on, taking Pfeifer and Tokle and the 10th Mountain Division with it. Tokle was later killed in Italy and Pfeifer was wounded.

In the spring of 1945 Walter Paepcke, president of the Container Corporation of America and one of Chicago's most progressive businessmen, was at his ranch at Larkspur, Colorado, when he heard something about Aspen and the two soldiers who had thought it had possibilities as a skiing center. He and his wife went over to Aspen, and were immediately impressed. Learning that Friedl Pfeifer was now convalescing in a hospital in California, Walter Paepcke went out to see him. The result of this visit was the creation by Paepcke of the Aspen Company. The company had as its purpose the bringing into being of "a balanced community which will offer people three things: a livelihood, a healthful life, and the opportunity to obtain culture." Paepcke went back to Chicago, got a few hundred thousand dollars from his business friends, and put in a large but undisclosed amount of his own money. Meanwhile Friedl, fully recovered, made contact with the men of the 10th Mountain Division and began lining up future citizens for the town. In the fall of 1945 dischargees from the 10th began coming back, many of them married and with families by this time. They cut roads and ski trails; erected cabins and dormitories. Then in the Spring of 1946, the longest ski-chair lift in the world, rising to 11,000 feet, was erected on the slopes of the Roaring Fork. It cost Paepcke and his friends a cool quarter of a million.

Paepcke, by now completely absorbed in Aspen, determined to restore the U. S. Grant-era, pink-stucco and gingerbread architecture of the town. He called in Herbert Bayer, the Chicago designer, and Walter Gropius, then head of the Harvard University School of Architecture. The old Wheeler Opera House, where Lillian Russell, Helena Modjeska, E. H. Sothern, and Julia Marlowe had performed back in the old mining-camp

days, was restored and reopened as a musical conservatory. The ancient Hotel Jerome was painted and refurbished and once again became the center of the town's social life, its baroque ornateness contrasting strangely with the tile modernity of its new outdoor swimming pool. Dilapidated shops were fixed up and reopened; the dirt roads were improved; the old houses shored up and made livable.

By the winter of '47, Aspen had become a big-time ski center, but it was not until two years later that the Aspen Company's first great cultural project came into being. This was the Goethe Bicentennial and Music Festival, which attracted more than 1000 visitors in three weeks to hear the music of Dmitri Mitropoulos, Nathan Milstein, and Artur Rubinstein, and to listen to such scholars as Albert Schweitzer, Ortega y Gasset, and Robert M. Hutchins, then chancellor of the University of Chicago. In 1950 the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies was initiated, the theory being that thousands of Americans are looking for a vacation that will combine a love of the outdoors with a zest for knowledge. As part of that program a Great Books symposium was instituted, with Dr. Mortimer Adler and the other "Great Bookies" of the University of Chicago participating. The symposium examined such questions as the relation between freedom and security, and the meaning of such words as *goodness* and *happiness*. There was no drilling of dogmas, no categorical answering. "In the long run it must be moral, philosophical, and religious values that teach us how to lead a peaceful and prosperous life; because, unless we understand where we are going, it does no good to get there in a jet-propelled plane."

This, then, is Aspen today—a Chicago suburb infinitely more valuable to the city than Cicero, say. Aspen is for Walter Paepcke what Ravinia was for Louis Eckstein—his "yacht."

Rugged individualism is a term that has come somewhat into contempt today, but certainly no town in America owes more

to rugged individualism than does Chicago. The men who planted the city and then heaved it up out of the mud and muck were short on manners and some of them were short on ethics, but they had a lot of the only quality that could have built a city in such an unlikely place—guts. And, because in Chicago the hustlers and the artists have mingled the way they have, and because Chicago culture is so uniquely indebted to the Big Wheels in commerce and industry, let's take a brief look at a few of the more colorful mastodons of the LaSalle Street jungle.

First, there was Gurdon Hubbard, whom the Indians called "Swift Walker"—the trapper and trader who laid out the trail that later became State Street, and to whom the Indians gave the 14-year-old girl-child Watseka as a "bride" (without benefit of clergy). Later the "Swift-Walker" prospered greatly; he cast aside Watseka and took unto himself a legal helpmeet; he was one of the founders of the fur trade upon which Chicago's early prosperity was based, and he lived on well into the middle of the 19th century, a rich, hearty man who never forgot the days when he had eaten jerked buffalo meat with the Sac, the Fox, and the Pottawatami, and had gone to bed with one of their daughters.

Then there was Chicago's first mayor, William Ogden. He was a big man, too. He gambled on Chicago and won, hanging on to his real estate holdings all through the terrible panic of 1837, when I.O.U.'s reading "good for one shave" and "good for one drink" replaced money. (The wits of the time delighted in placing these "good for one drink" cards in the collection boxes of the churches.) There were signs in the mudholes on Washington and Randolph Streets in those days reading "No Bottom Here" and "Shortest Road to China," but Ogden hung grimly onto the muck. Later the muck made him a fortune, and he turned to playing with railroads, building the Galena and Chicago Union in 1847. He became the first president of the Union Pacific, investing the money he had made in Chicago

real estate in a gamble on the westward expansion of the United States. He got others to invest, too, and there were those who wanted to lynch him when it seemed that the land they had bought along the new railroad's right-of-way was going to be worthless. But even as he had hung on to the land in 1837, so Ogden hung on to the railroad in 1847, and again he won. Later he became the first president of Rush Medical College, and initiated that tradition of larger service to the community that has been the trade-mark of Chicago business.

A contemporary of Ogden was Long John Wentworth. Long John, all six foot six of him, arrived in town in 1836, barefooted and with all his worldly goods wrapped up in a blue handkerchief. He had come on foot all the way from Michigan City, Indiana, carrying his boots so that they wouldn't get dirty. He had just graduated from Dartmouth College in his native New Hampshire, and he had $100 with him. It wasn't long before he had parlayed the $100 into enough money ($2800) to buy the Chicago *Democrat*. He promptly wangled the city printing job, which caused a rival paper to remark cattily that: "Long John, as has been anticipated, has been selected city printer. He don't know A from W or a sheep's foot from a mallet."[1]

Perhaps he didn't. But he did know politics; at the age of twenty-eight he was a Congressman, and in 1857 he was elected as Chicago's first Republican mayor. By this time the colorful Long John was the most popular man in town, famed for his feats of strength no less than for his political acumen. His handshake was so crushing that friends would frequently cross the street when they saw him coming and hide in doorways, alleys, or other convenient shelter until he had passed. Once, when a jeweler was a little slow in removing a pair of two-hundred-pound bronze lions that Long John thought were obstructing

1. E. Poole, *Giants Gone; The Men Who Made Chicago* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1943), p. 31.

the sidewalk, Hizzoner picked them up personally and threw them on to a garbage wagon.

Long John was loved for his breezy, democratic ways. He had no truck with protocol and red tape. When the Prince of Wales visited Chicago, the mayor presented him to a large crowd of the local citizenry. The young man who was soon to be Edward VII was temporarily at a loss for words, so Long John smote him on the back with a ham-like hand and shouted, "Say something, Sonny!" The crowd loved it, and the Prince didn't seem to mind a bit.

But Mayor Wentworth, for all his breezy informality, liked to be treated for what he was. He lived at the Sherman House for years, outlasting a succession of managers of the establishment. When a new maître d'hôtel introduced himself one day in the lobby, Long John stopped him abruptly. "Boy," he said, "I have lived here for sixteen years. Wait until I call for you."

In his old age, Long John began to get sentimental about his native New Hampshire. He sent back to New England for a seventy-two-foot shaft of native granite for his gravestone; it had to be transported to Chicago on two flat cars.

A big man any way you looked at him was Long John Wentworth.

Potter Palmer, the founder of one of Chicago's great fortunes, was the exact antithesis of Long John. He was a quiet little man, born of Quaker parents in Albany County, New York, who came to Chicago in 1852 and opened a dry goods store on Lake Street. The store was staffed with two bright young clerks named Levi Leiter and Marshall Field; later they bought Palmer out and moved over to State Street, and another Chicago business dynasty came into being—Marshall Field's.

But to get back to little Potter Palmer. He was so small and quiet that he fooled people. The truth was that shy little Mr. Palmer was one of the coolest, most daring gamblers in a city

of gamblers. He gambled in real estate. He gambled in the market. He gambled in the wheat pit. And he never lost.

He was a builder, too. He got State Street paved and widened to a width of one hundred feet. He began building an elegant hotel, which he called the Palmer House. He became the first president of the Chicago Baseball Club. And he married Bertha Honorè. All this was in 1871.

Then came the Fire. Potter had made his fortune and he was in favor of quitting the smouldering ruins of Chicago and retiring eastward. But he reckoned without Bertha. From now on, she made the decisions. The Potter Palmers would stay in Chicago, help rebuild it, and dominate it socially. They did. Up went the new Palmer House on State Street; up went the imposing Potter Palmer mansion on the North Side; up went the quiet little man's fortune as he threw his money into another gamble on Chicago. Into the new mansion came the art treasures of Europe, ultimately to find their way to the walls of the Chicago Art Institute. Bertha had a real appreciation of art, and she made of Potter a patron of the arts. Without the Potter Palmers the cultural and social life of the Chicago that was rebuilt after the fire would have been immeasurably poorer.

Philip Armour came down to Packingtown from Milwaukee in 1875. He was a picturesque freebooter of the old school, primarily a meat packer, but also a spectacular plunger in the wheat market. He jousted with Potter Palmer in LaSalle Street during the day, and in the evening bowled with his cronies for a stake of $10 per pin. He was not ostensibly a religious man, but he had a healthy respect for churches and preachers and when he heard the Rev. Frank Gunsaulus preach on "What I Would Do With $1,000,000" at Plymouth Congregational Church, he gave Gunsaulus the million. The result was the Armour Institute. The hog-butcher wanted religion "sixteen ounces to the pound" at Armour, but it had to be non-

denominational; "it makes no difference to me whether converts are baptized in a soup bowl, a pond, or a river," he pontificated. A lot of people didn't like Armour and were secretly glad when the government pilloried him for allegedly selling bad canned beef to the Army during the Spanish-American War. But, like the other talented gamblers of LaSalle Street, Armour had a perverse interest in the arts and his name was found on the rosters of most of the town's cultural institutions.

Not too many people liked Phil Armour, but nobody liked George M. Pullman. He was a lone wolf. He battled the unions, Eugene Debs, and his competitors with equal bitterness. He built a model town far down on the South Side and the section still bears his name. However, his utopia soon degenerated into a slum and his name survives today solely in connection with his sleeping cars.

Julius Rosenwald was a rugged individualist of a different order. He arrived from New York in 1885 and began a modest clothing manufacturing business. Shortly thereafter he "fell into a barrel of ice cream and had to eat his way out." A young railroad station agent named Richard Sears and a watchmaker by the name of Roebuck had started up a little mail-order business in Chicago, getting into it when Sears fell heir to a box of watches on which nobody would pay the freight. Sears and Roebuck had bought some suits from Rosenwald and couldn't pay for them, so Rosenwald came by to look over their business and see what his chances of collecting were. The result was an agreement whereby Rosenwald agreed to supply suits for Sears and Roebuck in return for a one-quarter interest in the business. Rosenwald was not the big, bluff, gambler type of Chicago business tradition, but in his own quiet way he did all right. He was involved in about every good work in town and sat on the boards of all the philanthropies, and between benefactions he drove old, eccentric Aaron Montgomery Ward almost crazy. Ward had established the first mail-order

business in Chicago in the early 70's. Rosenwald founded the Museum of Science and Industry, gave $4,000,000 to the University of Chicago, established the fabulous Rosenwald Fund, and was a heavy and regular contributor to all good works and especially to Negro and Jewish charities.

A much more typical Chicago business buccaneer was Charles T. Yerkes. Odd, too, because Charlie came from the City of Brotherly Love. He got his start after the fire of '71 by investing Philadelphia city funds, embezzled by a friend of his who happened to be Philadelphia City Treasurer, in various Chicago ventures. However, the law caught up with him and made him give this money back to the Quaker City taxpayers. This held up Charlie, but not for long. Scenting opportunity for his particular talents in Chicago, he returned to the Windy City in 1881 and opened a broker's office. He soon made friends with William Lorimer, and with Billy's help built a political machine that enabled him to dictate the choice of governor of Illinois. With a little assistance from the notorious "Gray Wolves" of the City Council, Charlie soon controlled part of the Chicago transportation system and entered into a desperate (and ultimately losing) battle with Mayor Carter Harrison II to get hold of the rest.

When Yerkes was not trying to steal streetcar franchises or politicking with Lorimer, he was quite an upright citizen. His home was filled with Botticelli, Reubens, Hals, and Corot paintings, and not only that but he knew something about them. He was a man who could learn. In spite of a series of spicy adventures with various members of the opposite sex, he professed to be utterly devoted to his home and his family. On one occasion a paper hostile to him set up a catty story about his wife and had a reporter call on Yerkes with a galley of it and a request for comment. Yerkes read the story, looked the reporter squarely in the eye, and said calmly: "You can accuse me of all the crimes in the calendar and I won't have a word in

reply. But you can tell your employer that if he publishes one line of lies reflecting on my wife, I will not stop for legal proceedings. Within twenty-four hours I will shoot him like a dog."[2]

When the reporter returned to his editor with this information, the latter didn't hesitate. "Kill the page," he said. He knew Yerkes was a man of his word.

Yerkes rode high for awhile, and it was a little man by the name of George E. Cole of the Municipal Voters League who finally brought him down. His political power was broken; he lost the franchise fight with Carter Harrison II, and his various peccadilloes were unveiled for public inspection by hostile newspapers. He fled to England, where he later played a large and apparently honorable part in the creation of the London subway system. Before he left Chicago he gave the Yerkes Observatory to the University, and this benefaction turned out to be bread cast upon the waters, because when he got interested in London's traction problems he discovered that the key man in that situation was an avid amateur astronomer. This worthy was quite incorruptible, but he was delighted with Yerkes' knowledge of astronomy and in the long run that was what inclined him to the Yerkes point of view in the controversy over who should build the London subways and where.

Mention has already been made of Samuel Insull, the round little Greek who erected a utilities empire out of tissue paper and fled the country when the winds of Depression blew the fragile structure down. Sam was the founder of a brand-new school of accounting, according to which all expenses were considered as assets. When he died in Paris in 1938 he left $1000 in cash and $14,000,000 worth of debts, a truly impressive accomplishment. But in his heyday he was the arbiter of opera in Chicago, and the builder of the enormous opera house on Wacker Drive. Like Yerkes, he was a ruthless freebooter who

2. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

tore the city down and built it up in about equal proportions, and like Yerkes he had a perverse and yet sincere interest in the cultural life of the town. He was his own lodge—Insull Anomalous.

Yerkes and Insull belong basically in the same ruthless, driving, gambling category as Ogden, Armour, Pullman, and Palmer. They swept the ends a little more widely and so got out of bounds whereas the latter quartet tended to plunge straight ahead and played the game hard but legally. You will have to find a new category, however, for two Chicago businessmen for whom art came first and business second and against whom no imputation of gambling, freebooting, or end-running can possibly be brought. They were Charles Hutchinson, the banker, and Martin Ryerson, of the famous steel family.

Charles Hutchinson's father was "Old Hutch," the hard-drinking, hard-driving Board of Trade plunger who was right out of the Ogden-Armour-Pullman-Palmer mould. Charles himself was a sensitive, intelligent, and deeply religious boy who wanted to go to college but who acceded to his father's wishes and became a banker instead. He was a good banker, too, and worked himself up from assistant cashier at the Corn Exchange Bank to the presidency of the institution.

But his primary interest, to the end of his days, was Chicago culture. He was the first president of the Art Institute, with Martin Ryerson, a shy, scholarly man, as his vice president. He was treasurer of the opera company, and sat on the board of the Chicago Symphony. He was treasurer of the University of Chicago when Martin Ryerson was president of the Board of Trustees of the university. With Ryerson, he roamed over Europe, at his own expense, acquiring paintings and *objets d'art* for the Art Institute. The Ryerson-Hutchinson *coup* which brought the best of the Prince Demidoff collection to the Art Institute has already been chronicled in these pages.

Ryerson and Hutchinson are two names which are integrally bound up with the cultural history of Chicago.

Martin Ryerson was one of America's keenest connoisseurs of art in his own right. He was a personal friend of many of Europe's best-known artists, visiting Monet at Giverney and buying Renoir's "La Dame au Piano" directly from Renoir's studio. When Mary Cassatt informed Ryerson that it might be possible to acquire an El Greco altarpiece, Ryerson hurried to Spain and engaged in an intensive study of El Greco before he bought the altarpiece and presented it to the Art Institute as a memorial to Albert A. Sprague.

A meteoric Chicagoan who didn't fit any mould was the late Arthur Jerome Eddy. Ostensibly a lawyer, Eddy was actually a bundle of energy of diverse talents. As a lawyer he was the best courtroom orator in town, and the author of a volume on corporation law that became a textbook. He was a connoisseur of wines, an excellent cook, and a man well versed in the intricacies of art and letters. He originated several new dance steps. He was also a sportsman, a fencer of high calibre and a fisherman whose experiments revolutionized Santa Catalina Island fishing.

But his principal interest was art. In 1906 he airily wired the far-from-amiable Whistler in Italy: "Coming to Rome, may I see you?" He commissioned a full-length portrait from Whistler, and a portrait head from the sculptor Rodin. Arriving in Paris en route home with only $100 in his pockets, he saw Monet's "The Philosopher" in a window in Paris and left the $100 with the proprietor as a deposit. Later he found that the Whistler and the Monet, framed, were too big to be gotten into his house. He got them in somehow, and from then on busied himself in acquiring one of Chicago's finest art collections. When he died in 1920 his widow gave most of it to the Art Institute.

There are a lot of other Big Wheels in the succession that

leads from Gurdon Hubbard to Walter Paepcke who deserve mention—Frank Logan, donor of the Logan Prizes at the Art Institute, Clarence Buckingham, whose sister Kate gave the magnificent Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park in his memory; Charles Worcester, the lumberman who once copied a Cézanne so expertly he fooled a visiting curator into thinking it was an original; Harold McCormick, whose donations to the cause of opera in Chicago were enormous; Marshall Field III; Edward Ryerson; Chauncey McCormick—who today devotes full time to the presidency of the Art Institute. And mention should be made, too, of the Chicago Businessmen's Art Club, and the other organizations through which wheels little and big have participated in the cultural life of the town.

But this is only one small book. Suffice it to say that nowhere else in America has Big Business been more culture-conscious than in this City of the Big Shoulders. If commerce has a stewardship in the arts, nowhere has it been more admirably discharged than here in Hustlertown.

IF I WERE *founding a university I would found first a smoking room; then when I had a little more money in hand I would found a dormitory; then after that, or more probably with it, a decent reading room and a library. After that, if I still had more money that I couldn't use, I would hire a professor and get some text books.*—STEPHEN LEACOCK.

Chapter XII

Town and Gown

ON THE South Side of Chicago, its campus bisected by the old Midway Plaisance of the Columbian Exposition, is one of the world's great universities. Its gray Gothic spires rise handsomely above the wide, green ribbon of grass that was the main street of Uncle Dan Burnham's gleaming White City back in '93. The buildings and the pleasant walks between them are crowded with students from every corner of the earth, students who seem much younger and much more serious than the average undergraduate. Ivy gives the buildings a deceptive look of age; actually they are comparatively new. In them, under the tolerant eyes of one of the most progressive faculties ever assembled, you can study everything from theology to meat-packing. A degree from this university, especially a graduate degree, is a hallmark of distinction in the academic world. Compared to this place, Yale is a boys' boarding school and Princeton an upper-class kindergarten. Educators and scholars the world over look to the University of Chicago as Mohammedans do to Mecca.

But Chicago doesn't give a damn about it. As far as the city

is concerned, the university might as well be in Patagonia. As far as most of Chicago's newspapers are concerned, it might *better* be in Patagonia. There is no *rapprochement* whatsoever between the City of the Big Shoulders and the school with the big 450,000,000-volt synchrocyclotron. And this in spite of the fact that some of Chicago's biggest fortunes have been poured into the university and some of Chicago's best brains have labored tirelessly to make it what it is. As former President Robert M. Hutchins used to say, the university is much better known in England and in India than it is in Chicago.

Back in the days when the University of Chicago had a football team and the headline STAGG FEARS PURDUE appeared regularly in the newspapers every October, the town did pay a bit more attention to the goings-on down on the Midway than it has since Hutchins abolished the sport. Chicago, a sports-minded town, couldn't help being proud of the occasional Walter Eckersall or Jay Berwanger who turned up at Stagg Field, even though it couldn't quite understand what such admirable fellows were doing at such a crackpot school. But when the football gear was thrown out of the field house to make room for the uranium bricks, most of what little interest Chicago had in the university went with it. Chicago's attitude towards the school was somewhat that of the athletic father who has always wanted his son to play football and who is baffled at first, then hostile and finally indifferent when the strange offspring prefers painting lampshades. Hog-butcher Chicago couldn't understand the university, even though the hog-butchers endowed it with an Institute of Meat-Packing.

Considering what it later became, the beginning of the University of Chicago is almost ludicrously incongruous. Strictly speaking the school got its start back before the Civil War when Stephen A. Douglas gave a tract of land in the neighborhood of 35th and Cottage Grove for a Baptist college. This little denominational institution struggled along until around 1880,

when it went down for good beneath a load of taxes. But the Baptists, who already had a theological school at Morgan Park, near Chicago, clung grimly to the idea of having their own liberal arts college somewhere in the vicinity of the city. One of the leading laymen in the Baptist Church at this time was John D. Rockefeller, and, without saying much to anybody, Rockefeller began looking around for a good man to resurrect the defunct university.

Now previously Rockefeller had endowed a chair of Semitic Languages at Yale, and the occupant of that chair was a stocky young professor who was something of a prodigy—he had entered Muskingum College in Ohio when he was only nine years old and had graduated at thirteen and delivered his oration in Hebrew! Later he had taught at the Baptist Seminary at Morgan Park, and then had gone on to Yale to occupy the chair which Rockefeller had endowed. The name of this erudite young scholar was William Rainey Harper, and Rockefeller, who was in close personal touch with all the many Rockefeller interests, was quite impressed with him. He took to inviting Harper up from New Haven to his country place on the Hudson near Poughkeepsie, or to his home in New York for week ends. Without telling the youthful professor what he had in mind, he suggested to him that he make a study of the administrative set-up at Yale. When he thought Harper had learned something about college administration, he broached a plan: Harper should leave Yale, and with a million dollars of Rockefeller's money, should combine the Baptist seminary at Morgan Park with what was left of the old University of Chicago, and start a new, liberal education institution on the South Side of Chicago.

Rockefeller had the right man. Harper was an enthusiast; he hurled himself into the new project and descended upon unsuspecting Chicago like the Assyrians of Sennacherib. The plans for the school had multiplied in his head by this time and

he got another $2,000,000 from Rockefeller on condition that he would raise a million more from Chicago businessmen. The latter never knew what hit them. All through the long, hot summer of '91 Harper besieged the Swifts, Armours, Hutchinsons, and Ryersons; it was strictly no contest; he got the million in ninety days. In October the first students of the new University of Chicago made their way through the weeds and tin cans of the sandy prairie around 57th Street to the first building to be erected, Cobb Lecture Hall. President Harper greeted them from a temporary platform in the temporary chapel; they all sang "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow," and the University of Chicago was officially launched on the path that was to bring it, in less than fifty years, to the atom bomb and the Institute of Radiobiology.

Right from the beginning the university was the most liberal educational institution on the face of the earth. Harper raided the colleges of the East to staff it with progressive men of intelligence and ability. From one ancient seat of learning he shamelessly pilfered three heads of departments. He offered them more money and more time for research than they could get anywhere else in the country—fourteen hours a week of classwork as over against the minimum of twenty-one at Yale, for instance—superior student material, and a wide tolerance for their views. They flocked to Chicago as to an educational utopia. The Baptist label was laid very lightly on the institution; Harper welcomed agnostics, Unitarians, Catholics, and Zoroastrians to both faculty and student body.

Oddly enough, Harper was also enthusiastic about athletics. He was an indefatigable bicycle-rider himself, rising at 5 A.M. for a whirl around the campus, and he was the college's No. 1 fan in all of its competitions with other schools. Once when a University of Chicago football team captain had low grades and the faculty made a rule that only those in good standing could participate in athletics, Harper hit the ceiling. "I'll veto

it!" he shouted. He did, too, but they passed it over his veto.

As president of the university, Harper had to entertain a constant stream of academic dignitaries from all over the world, many of whom could not understand why a Baptist theologian, the president of a Baptist school, could not serve wines and other alcoholic beverages in his home. On one occasion, as Harper was explaining to a visiting professor from Paris why Baptists did not drink strong waters, a beer truck pulled up in front of the house and, in full view of the Frenchman, unloaded several cases of stout. Harper's sons almost passed out from laughing as their father tried to explain to the visitor that his physician had ordered him to drink several bottles of stout a day to relax him and help him put on weight.

Harper was a well-rounded man, with or without the stout. He was an epicure of such distinction that Chicago hostesses would frequently call him up to consult with him about what wine to serve with the roast and what with the fish, and, in spite of his Baptist background he was considered an expert on such matters. (When he was away from Chicago and dining at Sherry's in New York, he always ordered the finest wines for his table.) He was also the best "beggar" in Chicago, raising a total of more than $20,000,000 for the University during his tenure as president. He made no pretty ethical distinctions between donors, accepting money from Charlie Yerkes as readily as from Rockefeller, Swift, Hutchinson, or any of the other "respectable" sources. Once they had given the money he paid no attention to them anyway; it was distinctly understood that a gift to the University of Chicago carried with it no right to dictate policy. With respect to money Harper's attitude was like that of Rockefeller's. John D. was always amused when people referred to his money as "tainted." On one occasion when Rockefeller and old Mrs. Cyrus McCormick were dining with Harper, a messenger brought a letter to Rockefeller from the president of a small college, virtuously declining his prof-

fered gift. Rockefeller chuckled and shouted into Mrs. McCormick's ear trumpet: "Hattie, this time the joke's on you! The tainted money I meant to give 'em was International Harvester stock!"

Harper literally burned himself out for the University of Chicago. His doctor, the celebrated Chicago surgeon Frank Billings, tried to get him to slow down. He did succeed in getting Harper to drink stout for relaxation, but he couldn't get him to take up smoking. At the untimely age of forty-nine, Harper died.

In 1929, a second boy wonder was wrenched away from Yale and brought to the Midway to turn the place upside down. This was Robert Maynard Hutchins, and while he was quite a different type from Harper, his impact on the university was no less resounding. A fine, handsome figure of a man, Hutchins exercised something like a mesmeric spell over the distaff side and quickly divided the males who came in contact with him into violently pro and anti factions. He was admittedly a brilliant man and an exceedingly capable administrator, but the community at large couldn't understand him any more than it could the university as a whole. He abolished intercollegiate football, thereby committing a heresy in the eyes of the Chicago press of somewhat more importance than that which brought Savanarola to the stake. He made no concessions to public opinion, to the newspapers, or to his own trustees, but the latter had long been conditioned to this state of affairs and so didn't protest overly much. He espoused unpopular causes and was coolly—and brilliantly—contemptuous of those who ventured to criticize. He backed up his professors, gave them as much freedom as ever Harper had, was liked by the student body, and became the somewhat reluctant lion of Chicago society, in spite of his "leftishness."

Hutchins had a philosophy of education which ran contrary to that in vogue in most of America's colleges and univer-

sities. As far as methods were concerned, he believed in "progressive" education that would not gait the student to the speed of the average member of the class but would let him forge ahead on his own. But where content was concerned, it was another story. Here he was a reactionary with a "back to the classics" philosophy. The combination of progressive method with classical content was the essence of the Hutchins plan for college education.

The two principal legacies of Robert Maynard Hutchins to the University of Chicago are: (1) The Chicago College Plan; and (2) The Great Books Course.

The Plan, popularly known as the "B.A.'s for bobby-soxers" program, is the administrative expression of Hutchins' "progressive method plus classical content" philosophy. It telescopes the final two years of high school (11th and 12th grades) into the usual four years of college, enabling the student to do the six years work in four—or even less, if the student is able to do it. To accomplish this, the University is divided into two sections: the College (freshman and sophomore years) for a general education which is strongly classical and contains virtually no electives; and the Divisions and Schools, where, beginning with the Junior year, the student may specialize.

Basic to The Plan is the idea that no student shall be held back by the relative slowness of other students. Before final enrollment in the College, all prospective students take "placement tests" to determine how much or how little of the total program they need. Their particular program is then tailored to their needs and abilities. This makes it perfectly possible for a fifteen-year-old boy or girl to attain a B.A. degree in two years or less, and accounts for the youthfulness of many of the students one sees on the campus.

The second Hutchins legacy, the Great Books course, is without doubt the most ambitious and comprehensive program of adult education ever offered any people anywhere. Any-

body who can read is eligible to enroll in a Great Books course, and anyone who follows the course through to its conclusion (ten years at present) will find himself the possessor of a classical education as good as it is possible to get inside or outside of college.

Actually the Great Books idea didn't originate with Hutchins. More than thirty years ago Professor John Erskine at Columbia was talking about the "great books," and one of his students was Mortimer Adler, who, as the apostle of the neo-Thomist philosophy, was to find a friendly haven on the faculty of the University of Chicago under Hutchins. Adler never forgot Erskine's agitation for the "great books"; he kept talking about the idea to his boss and an opportunity came to do something about it when St. John's College at Annapolis, Maryland, went on the rocks financially and was taken over by a group headed by Hutchins. Stringfellow Barr was installed as president of St. John's and Scott Buchanan as dean, and an undergraduate classical education program was undertaken centering around the Great Books. The formula here was the one Hutchins had evolved for the University of Chicago College—classical content and progressive method.

The idea worked out so well at St. John's that Hutchins enrolled a group of university trustees and Chicago businessmen in a special Great Books group which he conducted in person. This was known locally as the "Fat Man's Great Books Class," and the course cost $100 per member.

By now Hutchins had the Great Books idea firmly in his teeth. He was Director of the Encyclopedia Britannica as well as President of the University, and in that capacity he decided to publish a fifty-four-volume collection of the world's great books. Accompanying this collection was to be an index of great ideas, or *Syntopicon*, which would do for ideas what the dictionary did for words.

By 1945 Hutchins and his No. 1 "Great Bookie," Mortimer

Adler, had worked out a complete program for a Great Books course and had established a non-profit Great Books Foundation, controlled by the University of Chicago. This program was launched experimentally in 1945 by the Chicago Public Library in conjunction with the University of Chicago, and from Chicago it was destined to spread rapidly over the whole country.

The "Great Books" program is simply an organized reading and discussion of the great books of western civilization. Its aim is not to impart knowledge of the past but to reach for the best wisdom of all the ages, both for enlightenment and for an understanding of contemporary problems. Taking the books in chronological order, the course goes through the scope of the whole western tradition each year, with the readings of that year so arranged chronologically that a section of civilization's "great conversation" is quite intelligible. At present there are ten yearly courses.

The Great Books discussion seminars are limited to thirty members, who come together on an average of once every two weeks. There are two instructors in each seminar who work together as discussion leaders. It is their job to *ask questions*, not to give answers. Supplementing the readings and discussions are a series of formal lectures at stated intervals on such subjects as Language and Meaning, Sense and Intellect (The Problem of the Universal), Love and Desire, Pleasure and the Good, etc. In their reading, the members of the seminars use a special, paper-bound edition of the Great Books for their yearly course which is made available to them for $9.60.

The books themselves are indubitably great. The first year's course, the simplest and most elementary, includes portions of the *Old* and *New Testament;* Plato's *Apology, Crito,* and *Republic;* Thucydides' *History;* Aristophanes' *Lysistrata, Birds,* and *Clouds;* the works of Aristotle; and selections from Plutarch, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Mon-

taigne, Shakespeare, John Locke, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and *The Federalist Papers*.

The classes themselves bring together all sorts of people of all ages, and the reactions to the readings are as varied as the members. One man, who got a new insight into religion after reading St. Augustine's *Confessions* put it like this: "First you think of an old man with a beard. Then you take away the beard. Then you take away the old man. What's left is God." A Chicago advertising man provides his classmates with poetic slogans for every book. For instance:

St. Thomas Aquinas' *Treatise on Law:* "A law is a law is a law."

Machiavelli's *The Prince:* "Do unto others as they would do unto you, but do it first."

Aristotle's *Ethics:* "The rich don't know how to live, but they sure know where."

Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War:* "The champ obscurant is old man Thucydides; every page in his book conceals the lucidities."

When the Great Books program was initiated at the Chicago Public Library, Mayor Martin Kennelly proclaimed a "Great Books Week." It was the first notice City Hall had taken of the University of Chicago since the days of Amos Alonzo Stagg. Not even the creation of the atom bomb had excited such official attention.

The University of Chicago has a unique art group in its Renaissance Society. This organization has more than six hundred student and faculty members who pay $5.00 and up per year for the privilege of belonging, and is supervised by Professor Ulrich A. Middledorf, head of the Art Department. It has its own rooms in Goodspeed Hall, and presents art exhibitions, lectures, gallery talks, musical concerts, and dance programs.

One of the principal adornments of the Midway is the Oriental Institute at University Avenue and 58th Street. Until his

death in 1935, the eminent Egyptologist James Henry Breasted was director of the Institute, which contains one of the world's best collections of the relics of antiquity. Dr. Breasted thought of the Institute as "essentially an organized endeavor to recover the lost story of the rise of man by salvaging the surviving evidence," and in gathering this evidence the Institute has carried on field operations extending from Turkey through Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Persia, and upper Egypt. The result is an impressive collection of ancient documents, sculptures, mummies and *objets d'art*. The Institute building contains not only halls and galleries for the exhibition of this material but photographic laboratories and workshops where restoration work can be done.

The greatest difficulty yet faced by the Institute was the installation of a forty-ton Assyrian bull discovered by Professor Edward Chiera in the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad. In order to get this massive object—sixteen feet high and slightly more than sixteen feet in length—into the Institute, it was necessary to tear out part of the wall of the Egyptian Hall. A special foundation had to be constructed—forty tons is a lot of bull—and there this ancient animal stands, fully as impressive as he was centuries ago in Khorsabad.

Some slight comparison between the University of Chicago and Chicago's other big university, Northwestern, may be in order. The University of Chicago, as indicated, does not touch the life of the city to any great extent, and the city has made little impression on the university. Northwestern, however, is much more closely associated with the town, even though its main campus is in the suburb of Evanston. University of Chicago alumni are scattered all over the world, but a sizeable group of Northwestern grads, especially those in Law and Business Administration, live and work in the Chicago area and the university draws its student body chiefly from the Mid-West. Moreover, Northwestern has a football team and is not as academically pretentious as the University of Chicago. It's a

"social" school, with scads of pretty co-eds, lots of dances, and a tradition that is old for Chicago. It conforms, in a general way, to the picture of what the average citizen thinks a university should be. It offers no B.A.'s to bobby-soxers, produces no atom bombs, and no Great Books courses.

Oddly enough Northwestern, which started out as a Methodist school and is still under the nominal auspices of the Methodist Church, is one of the most convivial and pleasant colleges in the country. "Northwestern for its pretty girls" is not just a line from a song. And its blond he-men roaming the campus in their purple sweaters with the big white *N*'s, its ivy-covered buildings, and its lakeside location in one of the finest communities in the world, all tend to make Northwestern the prototype of the big, democratic Midwestern university, a little short on scholarship, perhaps, but long on living, and lots of fun for four years. Chicago, which can't understand the University of Chicago, understands and likes Northwestern, or thinks it does.

To get back to the University of Chicago: Hutchins is gone now, to direct the work of the Ford Foundation. His successor, Lawrence Kimpton, is an able administrator who may or may not junk many of the Hutchins innovations and who is almost certain to guide the University on a more cautious course than his predecessor did. But the short tradition of the school, from William Rainey Harper through Robert Maynard Hutchins, is so liberal and the faculty acquired through years of progressive administration so solidly in favor of maintaining the unique U. of C. academic prestige that it is unlikely that the character of the school will change very radically. It will continue to attract the Big Brains and the whiz-kids, leaving the pretty girls and the football players to Northwestern.

And Chicago, which doesn't know a synchrocyclotron from a synopticon, will keep right on ignoring its university.

Unless the trustees bring back Stagg, that is.

IT ISN'T HARD *to love a town for its broad and bending boulevards, its lamplit parks and its endowed opera. But you never truly love a place till you love it for its alleys, too. For the horse-and-wagon, cat-and-ashcan-alleys below the thousand-girdered El.*—NELSON ALGREN.

Chapter XIII

The Algren Age

IN THE FIRST chapter of this book I ventured the opinion that Chicago today was experiencing a modest cultural revival reminiscent of, but not equal to, that of 1912-1924.

This will be disputed. In particular it will be disputed by those who take a dim view of that previous Golden Age, like Irving Howe. Howe, in his curiously unsympathetic biography of Sherwood Anderson, says of the earlier awakening that the Chicago writers of that day "were trying hurriedly to create a culture on the cuff." Obviously a critic who is not much impressed by the Anderson-Dreiser-Hecht era is going to be even less impressed by the Algren Age. And locally there will be those who, although themselves a part of the modern renaissance, honestly cannot see that it amounts to very much—Syd Harris and Mary Jane Ward, for instance. Some cynic has defined a "literary school" as two writers living in the same town who hate each other, and this definition, unfortunately, applies to the "Chicago school." Perhaps that's a little strong; the boys and girls don't actually hate each other and at Book and Author luncheons, meetings of the Society of Midland Authors, etc., they are able to give a pretty good imitation of craftsmen who

enjoy each other's company. But not very many of them attend these affairs; they tend to be "loners," and when they are interviewed separately about the state of creative writing in Chicago, the interviewer is likely to come away with a fine bag of unquotable quotes and catty asides. There was a certain homogeneity to the 1912-1924 revival, an *esprit de corps,* that is lacking today.

Notwithstanding, there is a literary ferment in Chicago today. The place is yeasty with good writing. When Fred B. Millett compiled his exhaustive critical survey of *Contemporary American Authors* in 1940, he did not list a single novelist, short-story writer, critic, or historian who was then resident in Chicago.[1] There were many representatives of the so-called "Golden Age," such as Dreiser, Anderson, Hecht, Edna Ferber, Floyd Dell, and Robert Herrick; there were contemporary expatriates like Margaret Ayer Barnes, James Farrell, and Albert Halper; there were Midwesterners aplenty—Ruth Suckow, Phil Stong, Glenway Westcott, Sinclair Lewis, Booth Tarkington. But actual, current, working Chicagoans there were none. (Of course there *were* some, but Mr. Millett just didn't think they were important enough.)

Today any such survey which omitted the names of Nelson Algren, Willard Motley, Mary Jane Ward, Arthur Meeker, Paul Angle, Herman Kogan, Lloyd Wendt, Meyer Levin, Louis Zara, and Karl Shapiro—to mention only a few—would be ridiculous. It may be debatable that these people constitute a "school" or that their period is a "Golden Age"; what is not debatable is the fact that they are significant writers working in Chicago, and that there are more of them than at any time since 1924.

There are, it seems to me, two categories of Chicago writing today. First, there is the writing *about* Chicago by writers living

1. Fred Millett, *Contemporary American Authors* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940).

elsewhere. Second, there are the Chicago writers themselves, in residence but not necessarily limiting themselves to Chicago as a theme.

A good deal of the writing in the first category comes from expatriate Chicagoans, who continue to be fascinated by the town even though they choose to live elsewhere. Albert Halper, the proletarian novelist who grew up in a Chicago slum, has long since removed to New York but continues to use a Chicago locale for much of his writing. The same is true of James T. Farrell, who will keep on writing about the South Side Irish boys he knew as a kid even though he domiciles himself in Timbuctoo. Robert Casey of the old *Daily News* gang has just come up with a book of Chicago anecdotes called *Chicago Medium Rare*. And the writers who were a part of the earlier renaissance (Carl Sandburg, Alfred Kreymborg, Ben Hecht, Harry Hansen, Burton Rascoe, etc.) are going to keep on finding a lot of current inspiration in their memories of the good old days at Schlogl's. (Sterling North, who just hasn't been the same since he deserted the *Daily News* for what he thought were greener pastures on Manhattan, is currently in the book stores with *Reunion on the Wabash.)*

One of the most ambitious novels about Chicago in recent years is Ira Morris's *The Chicago Story*, published in 1952. This is a long, involved, and on the whole rather dull story about a meat-packing family. Nelson Algren, in his review of the book in the *New York Times*, says that the only personality in it is a two-headed turtle that can't make up its mind. Nelson gave the book both barrels, and the consensus is that at least one blast was deserved. The "pigherds" (Algren's word) deserve a Boswell, but Mr. Morris doesn't quite qualify.

It is two Chicago expatriates, now nested in Manhattan, who have provided modern literature with its sharpest and most penetrating documentation of the tough life of the city's streets—Albert Halper and James T. Farrell. In *The Chute*, *The Foun-*

dry, *The Little People*, and *Sons of the Fathers*, Halper dissected lower-middle-class Chicago pitilessly. A so-called "proletarian novelist," Halper mellowed considerably after his removal to New York and today his published reminiscences of Chicago are nostalgic and even tender.

James T. Farrell, like Halper, is Chicago-born and an exponent of the most relentless realism. His *Studs Lonigan* trilogy is the longest and most detailed of all fictional studies of Chicago life, and there can be little doubt that Farrell is the dean of the shock 'em and sock 'em school of writing and the most conscientious practitioner of the realistic novelist's craft. His writing, on the whole, is ponderous and even pedantic, but it is honest. He writes with power, the kind of cumulative power that derives from rigorous attention to detail. Some of *Studs Lonigan* is hard going, but when we have finished the trilogy we have an absolutely accurate and unvarnished picture not only of a young lower-middle-class Irishman but of all the people and institutions that helped to make him what he was. And it is a picture that is not only sociologically but psychologically true. Unlike Halper, time and distance have not appreciably thawed out Farrell.

When we come to the second category—Chicago writers in residence—there are four names that lead all the rest: Nelson Algren, Willard Motley, Mary Jane Ward, and Arthur Meeker. Meeker can be included only by a large measure of courtesy, for while he is a Chicagoan born and bred and maintains an apartment in the city, he spends most of his time in Switzerland.

Nelson Algren is a two-fisted puncher with poetry in both mitts. He says, "You have to love a town a little before you earn the right to knock it," and Nelson must love Chicago a lot to knock it the way he does. To him it's a town whose pioneers

> .... skinned the redskin down to his final feather, the forests down to the ultimate leaf of autumn, the farmer out of his last wormy

kernel of Indian corn; and passed the rain-swept seasons between cheerfully skinning one another. (Chicago: *City on the Make*)

Chicago, to Algren, is "Hustlertown," and the essence of it is not the Art Institute or Orchestra Hall but the shabby, down-at-the-heels, corner-of-the-mouth intersection of Milwaukee Avenue and Division Street. Its representative citizens are not the McCormicks, Ryersons, Fields, and Kennellys but the Frankie Machines, the dealers with the "golden arms," the loud-mouthed Sobotniks, the police captains who are eternally and wearily trying to figure out who put the sodium amytal in the Hill and Hill. All of Algren's characters are Leo Cooneys for whom life is a bad bang; a bum rap and no probation. The town itself is a neon wilderness where morning never comes and an endless procession of winos, perverts, prostitutes, thieves, preliminary fighters, and spavined horse players shuffle up and down, trying to keep out of the way of the avaricious hustlers.

And yet Algren seems to have worked out a philosophy of the town; seems to have tried to relate the subterranean life of Division Street to the inner life of all men. Chicago is, he says

> . . . the place built out of Man's ceaseless failure to overcome himself. Out of Man's endless war against himself we build our successes as well as our failures. Making it the city of all cities most like Man himself—loneliest creation of all this very old poor earth. (Chicago: *City on the Make*).

There is in all of Algren's writing a flavor strongly reminiscent of Thomas Wolfe. Perhaps it is the poetic prose that both employ, the little literary trick of suddenly shifting the beat of the writing from rhetoric to rhapsody. Or perhaps it is the redundancy, the repetitiveness of both. Wolfe wrote and rewrote the same theme, created and recreated the same characters, in all of his books. Algren does the same thing, and not quite as successfully as Wolfe did, perhaps because he hasn't

achieved Wolfe's tremendous output and we come upon his characters too often. Most of the people we meet in *The Man with the Golden Arm* we met in Algren's book of short stories, *The Neon Wilderness;* many of the situations in the former book are taken, almost bodily, from the latter. The story of the attempt to rob old man Gold's department store by Rudy in the short story "Poor Man's Pennies" is repeated very similarly in *The Man with the Golden Arm*, with Frankie Machine's lupine side-kick as the thief. And the cynical, wisecracking police officer of "The Captain Has Bad Dreams" is the same captain, making the same cynical remarks to the lineup victims, as the captain who leads off in *The Man with the Golden Arm.*

This constant rewriting is legitimate, but in a writer of comparatively small output like Algren it is much more noticeable—and irritating—than in the work of an author like Wolfe. And Algren, although writing about the same characters over and over, does not turn them inside out the way Wolfe did, does not give the reader the feeling of experiencing fresh insight with each reacquaintance.

Technically, Algren's writing is good without being great. Where he touches greatness is in his ear for dialogue and his ability to create atmosphere. The dialogue is tough and the atmosphere odorous, but both are sharp and real. Algren gives us a slice of life, a slice of Chicago; it is raw, highly seasoned, and hard to chew, but when it's down we know we've had a meal.

The argument is made that Algren doesn't give us all of life or all of Chicago; that there are other neighborhoods besides West Division Street and even some people around town who are not hustlers, tramps, hop-heads, or thieves. It is true that Algren writes about Chicago as though the city as a whole was a mere magnification of West Division Street, and this of course is not the case. But most authors stake out claims on some narrow sector of human experience and then treat that

sector as though it constituted the whole of life. Only the greatest are able to interpret the whole in terms of the part, to relate the specific to the general, to lead the reader from the outer to the inner life. Algren does not do this and so he is not great, but at times he seems to be trying to do it; he gropes towards the great interpretation, and if he has not come close to it yet—well, he is still young and still in there trying, and he is coming on fast.

In a way Algren's characters remind us of the subjects in an Ivan Albright painting. They are deeply etched, with every unpleasant feature emphasized, at once repellent and attractive. It can be said of both that the depiction is too real, that it goes beyond reality to caricature. Yet it must also be said that sometimes caricature is truer to fact than photography.

A second entry in the raw realism sweepstakes in Chicago today is Willard Motley. His *We Fished All Night*, following the hard-hitting *Knock On Any Door*, has stamped Motley as a man with a very considerable talent. Comparison with Algren is inevitable, since both are Chicago writers, of about the same age, and dealing with similar themes and characters.

The comparison can be summed up, I think, in a single sentence: Motley has more power than Algren, but less finesse. If Algren deserves to be compared with Wolfe (and I think he does) then the comparison that comes to mind when we read Motley is with Upton Sinclair. There is a tincture of tenderness to Algren that is missing in Motley; the latter, like Sinclair before him, is mad. He is mad at discrimination and injustice and poverty, and his anger gives his writing a naked power that Algren's doesn't have. But his Aaron, Don, and Jim, the three returned veterans of *We Fished All Night*, are mere puppets arranged in a damning indictment of society. The indictment may be true, but the characters aren't; Algren's Frankie Machine is a much more recognizable type. Nelson isn't mad at anybody; he has a curious affection for his twisted prototypes

as people, as individuals, and he accepts them for what they are. He doesn't want to change them or the world or even ash-can-in-the-alley Chicago. Motley reveals no affection for his characters; he loves Mankind as a whole and fiercely resents injustice, but his characters, as individuals, mean little to him. And so they mean little to the reader. Sinclair, in his *The Jungle,* similarly revealed little affection for his people. They were a club with which to beat the capitalists, and that was about all.

But *The Jungle* hit with a terrific impact. So does *Knock On Any Door. We Fished All Night* is a bit more diffuse and considerably less powerful than Motley's previous work, but it, too, compels the reader's interest. Motley's situations are much more interesting than his characters, and his situations are better than Algren's. But Algren's characters are more believable even though, oddly enough, they are more nearly caricatures than Motley's are.

Motley, more than Algren, is in an old, radical Chicago tradition—the tradition of Dreiser and Sinclair, of Big Bill Haywood and the Haymarket anarchists, of Governor John Peter Altgeld (he of the "face like a suffering Christ") and Eugene Debs. A lot of good writing has come out of this tradition, and Motley's rates with the best of it. He has not yet produced anything as good as the best of Dreiser or the best of Sinclair, but he, like Algren, is coming on. Given a mellowing by the years and a little more psychological insight and Motley is quite likely to produce a masterpiece.

If Algren and Motley, the brass-knuckle boys, can be bracketed together as exponents of a gutty realism, then perhaps it is not too farfetched to join Mary Jane Ward and Arthur Meeker in unholy literary wedlock as the able practitioners of a more gentle and more artistic craft. Their range of interest is wider than that of Algren and Motley; they are more urbane and more skilled. Chicago is only one of their themes, but it is one which both have handled well. Mary Jane's current *It's*

Different for a Woman is the old but ever-titillating story of infidelity in suburbia, done with her usual clever, deft, and artful touch. It has more reader-appeal than her previous *A Little Night Music,* but not as much as *The Snake Pit.* The latter was a tour de force, a stunt which the author brought off magnificently and which overnight catapulted her into the front ranks of American writers. It was realistic but sensitive, and it showed great psychological insight. There is good psychological insight in all of Mary Jane's work, her short stories as well as her novels. She knows the human heart far better than do the brass-knuckle boys.

Arthur Meeker, like Mary Jane Ward, is a polished writer, an able technician. Nostalgia and understatement are his literary stock in trade, and he does very well with them. He has a strong sense of history—something that is lacking in Algren and Motley—and if he is less powerful than they are, he is also less erratic. His two books with a Chicago background, *The Far Away Music* (1945) and *Prairie Avenue* (1949) are characterized by sound research, attention to detail, and the ability to recapture the accent and atmosphere of an older, kindlier culture. His *The Ivory Mischief* (1942) and *The Silver Plume* (1952) are intriguing and skillful stories with French backgrounds.

The odd thing about Arthur Meeker is that he should ever have become an author at all. His father was a wealthy meat-packer, an official of Armour and Company who expected that when Arthur was old enough he would come into the packing business. But young Meeker perversely got a job as a newspaper reporter and with the money grubbed from that dismal occupation took a trip to Europe. It was there that he decided that he wanted to become a novelist, a decision that always did seem a little strange to Arthur Meeker Sr. When *The Ivory Mischief* was selected by the Book of the Month Club, young Arthur rushed to tell his father the news, and the latter's only comment

was a gloomy: "Is that good?" Later Arthur's father reconciled himself to the idea that his son was a writer and never would be a meat-packer, and in time even took a considerable amount of pride in being pointed out as "Art Meeker's father."

In the non-fiction field, there is a lot of good writing in Porkopolis today. Leonard Dubkin's *The White Lady*, the story of an albino bat, entitles him "to inclusion in that rare company of which Assisi's Francis is a sanctified and Hollywood's Disney a secular member," according to Frederick Van De Water in the *New York Times*. Paul Angle, Director of the Chicago Historical Society, is in the lists with *Bloody Williamson*, a lively account of the goings-on down around Herrin, Illinois, site of the infamous Herrin Massacre of some years back. Angle tells in detail for the first time the story of the earth-shaking feud between the Shelton and Birger gangs which ravaged Williamson County and much of the rest of central and southern Illinois a few years ago. The boys battled each other across the cornfields with tanks and aeroplanes, and Charlie Birger uttered that classic statement which has insured his niche in literature: "I don't know what the hell's the matter with me. Every time I kill a man it makes me sick afterward. I guess it's my stomach."

For a number of years the most prolific non-fiction writers in town have been Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, whose collaborations have included *Lords of the Levee*, the story of Hinky-Dink Kenna and Bath-house John Coughlin, and *Give the Lady What She Wants*, a history of Marshall Field and Company. Field's, incidentally, is certainly one of the best publicized stores in the world with both the Kogan-Wendt opus and Emily Kimbrough's *Through Charlie's Door* coming out in its centennial year. As for Kogan and Wendt, they are surefire writers with the reportorial touch. Kogan is now enriching current literature with book and drama reviews in the *Sun-Times*. That paper seems to be gestating a good deal of belles-

lettres lately; its city editor, Emmett Dedmon, is at this writing preparing a companion volume to the Random House *Incredible New York* which will be titled (what else?) *Incredible Chicago.*

Perhaps it ought to be acknowledged, in the interests of absolute accuracy, that there have been a number of literary expatriates who left Chicago without evincing any interest in returning, who have never written about the town, and who show every evidence of keeping as much space betwen themselves and Michigan Boulevard as possible. Mary Borden, daughter of an old Chicago family, is a topflight author today and her recent *You, the Jury* is a best-seller. She left town to attend Vassar, went from Vassar to Europe, and now makes her home there. Her themes are mostly Biblical, or at any rate historical, and Chicago doesn't seem to bother her one way or the other. Ernest Hemingway was born and brought up in Oak Park and has spent most of his life in trying to forget it. James Gould Cozzens was born in Chicago; so was John Dos Passos; so was Archibald MacLeish (well, really Glencoe). However, they don't say much about it.

There are a lot of other people around town who are contributing to the present literary ferment—publishers, science-fiction writers, journalists, critics, reviewers, broadcasters, and a goodly crop of scribblers less publicized—but not thereby less talented—than the ones I have named. Chicago is a good place, an exciting place, for the young writer these days.

THERE ARE TWO *kinds of people in this country. There are the ones who love Chicago and the ones who think it is unmitigated hell. I love it. If the world has been my oyster, Chicago has been my cocktail sauce.*—LOUELLA O. PARSONS.

Chapter XIV

Chicago Unlimited

ACCORDING to Nelson Algren, who loves the town quite as much as Louella does, Chicago is a place where bulls and foxes dine very well but lambs end up head down on the hook. I think the late Mayor Ed Kelly said that before Algren did, and Ed dined very well indeed. But regardless of who said it first it's a trenchant observation. This Chicago is a tough town, a very tough town, where the law of the jungle takes precedence over any more recent statutes.

No matter how much you love the town, you have to accept that, but with one important reservation—does anyone know of a city where lamb isn't a staple in the diet of the local bulls and foxes? And does anyone know of a town anywhere where the lambs dine on bull and fox steaks? In Chicago the brutal but universal hunt is carried out more openly and with less attention to the polite amenities, perhaps, but it is essentially the same hunt that goes on in New York, or Los Angeles, or London. There has been no nonsense in Chicago about calling the hunt a crusade, or a game, and that's about the only difference. If civilization, as some allege, is merely an increasingly complex set of rules and regulations governing the conduct of

the hunt, then perhaps you can say that Chicago is less civilized than some of the older world cities.

A modern writer, cerebrating in a New York magazine which its late editor described as "an adult comic book," recently described Chicago as "the second city," and the series of articles he wrote implied that it was second only by a statistical accident and really doesn't belong in the first ten. It's hopelessly provincial, he says, and has a terrible inferiority complex. It's a cultural Sahara.

I don't think that indictment will stand up. The town is not provincial. It's friendly, and to those accustomed to cold-roast Boston, rigor-mortis Philadelphia, phony Los Angeles, and go-to-hell New York, friendliness is a virtue so rare that it is likely to be confused with provincialism. And far from being a cultural Sahara, Chicago is actually the fertile seedbed for a good part of the native culture of the United States. What Boston and New England were to the country during the first fifty years of the 19th century, Chicago and the Midwest have been during the first five decades of the 20th. I hope that this book, in a small way, is a documentation of that thesis.

It is a foible of the age to describe every phenomenon in the argot of psychology. "Inferiority complex" is the term most of the pundits favor to describe Chicago's current state of mind. I'll go along with the psychological terminology, but "inferiority complex" is the wrong diagnosis of the disorder. It's much more serious than that; you can't pin a panty-waisted neurosis like that on a virile burg like Porkopolis. Actually Chicago suffers from a manic-depressive psychosis. No town ever grew to such a size in so short a time; no town was ever "higher" on itself than pre-1929 Chicago. It bragged, it boasted, it belittled, and it built. That was the manic phase. Then came the Great Depression, and Chicago was dealt a wallop in the ego from which it has not yet recovered. No town in the country had more unemployment than Chicago; no city had as high a per-

centage of the population on relief; no community had more spectacular and violent riots and "marches," or more widespread strikes and labor disorders. Down, down went Chicago's emotional curve. The proud civic motto "I Will" was thrown into the ashcan. Population growth was almost nil; industrial plant expansion came to a stand-still; skyscraper construction in the down-town section not only ceased but a number of skyline fixtures were actually torn down and converted into parking lots in order to save taxes. Today, the Prudential Insurance Company's forty-story skyscraper is rising at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street. It is the first piece of major construction in Chicago's Loop in more than twenty years!

That was the depressive phase. The patient was very ill.

Now Chicago is emerging from the depressive doldrums. The population has increased by some 600,000 over the past decade, and the Chicago area's plant expansion during the same period has been the greatest in the nation. The shock therapy may have cured the psychosis. A sadder and wiser and more mature town, Chicago realizes that it is not necessarily destiny's fair-haired boy; that it is probably not going to be the first city of the world or even the first city in the United States in the near future; that, indeed, it may soon be passed in population by Los Angeles. It is even making peace with the idea that few if any countries have more than one dominant cultural center, and that in the United States New York is, and is likely to remain, that center.

But Chicago, in its growing maturity, is coming to see that it can be the Florence to New York's Rome. The brokers in the art and entertainment fields will continue to prefer New York and Hollywood, and economic determinism will decree that artists, writers, and entertainers, as they become more successful and, therefore, more involved in the business end of their professions, will gravitate towards the east and west coasts.

But Chicago is and can increasingly be the place of incubation, the seedbed, the creative center. It can be the locus of opportunity for the young, for those who wish to experiment, for the innovators. And of these there will always be some, like Nelson Algren and the Albright twins and Aaron Bohrod, who will clasp the city to their hearts and make it theirs, and who will never wish or need to go elsewhere.

For Chicago, in spite of the jungle competitiveness that so absorbs Algren, in spite of its open worship of the bastard-god Success, in spite of its monumental political corruption, in spite of its porcine, ubiquitous, and powerful hoodlums, is a tremendously alive and creative place; a place of dreary means, perhaps, but also of great and challenging extremes. So Carl Sandburg found it when he wrote, "Show me another city so glad to be alive," and so it is. Where else will one find a lake so blue-green, vast, and cold—and a river so rotten with scum and filth? Where else will one find clean cloud-piercing buildings that are the glory of the greatest architects of the 20th century—looking down on the worst slums in the New World? Where will one find so many preachers (Chicago has more theological schools than any other city)? Where so many crooks, con-men, gangsters? Where so many good-looking stenographers? Where so many strip-teasers? Where so many gamblers? Where so many professors? Where so much danger? Where so much opportunity?

Recently a group of young Chicago radio and television actors and producers have banded together to form an organization which they call Chicago Unlimited. The purpose of the group is to hold for Chicago its pre-eminent position as low-budget innovator in the radio and television industries. The boys and girls are trying to bring talent to Chicago and to keep it here. They are resisting the centripetal tendency to fly off to New York and Hollywood once a small measure of "recognition" has been achieved.

The measure of success the group will enjoy is problematical,

since it has arrayed against it all the high brass of the big networks in both industries. But certainly it has gotten hold of an excellent name. Opportunity in Chicago for the young writer, artist, musician, architect, or actor *is* unlimited. Here, at a suitable distance from the commercial center of his craft, he is free to experiment and to develop in a way that is, if not impossible, at least difficult in New York or Hollywood. He does not have to fit any mould in Chicago, and he can draw for his inspiration on the electric vitality and the contagious brutality of the city.

For this is the most paradoxical city in the world, and in paradox there is the stuff of artistic creation in all fields of endeavor. How can a city be both brutal and friendly? Both radical and reactionary? Cultured and boorish? Corrupt and idealistic? Loved and hated?

It's true: Chicago is the most loved and most hated city in the United States and perhaps in the world. It is loved and hated by those who do not see the paradox; who see only the lovely or unlovely face of the city. And in Chicago these faces are not masked; they are there for everybody to see. When the artist does see the paradox, he is likely to want to stay and write about it as Algren does, or to paint it as Bohrod does. When he sees the paradox, sees both faces of the town, he is generally intrigued. He finds Chicago an exciting and emotionally rewarding place in which to live and work. If he doesn't see it he will either uncritically love the place for its beauty and vitality or loath it for its brutality and corruption. In either case he will not understand it.

It may be said that in this book I have claimed too much for Chicago, that its cultural life doesn't deserve this kind of documentation. Some may say that everything that Stalin has claimed for Russia this writer has claimed for Porkopolis. Chicago-style jazz; Chicago construction; the Chicago school of literature; Great Books courses; B.A.'s for bobby-soxers; atom bombs. First in this, first in that.

I don't think so. I have no especial reason for buttering up

Chicago; the town never did much for me. I am not a Midwesterner; I am a Connecticut Yankee who discovered Chicago as a student in the early thirties and who has been intrigued by this pork-and-poetry combination ever since. I'm a writer who has knocked it and defended it about equally; I think I understand it a little. I divide my time between Chicago and the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts, with frequent periods of residence in New York, so no one can accuse me of being a Rotary Club fanatic.

But—let's face it—I do love Chicago. Move over, Nelson. Move over, Aaron.

And pass the cocktail sauce, Louella.

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